



# BANKING FRONTIERS

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# MAPPING THE MARKETING TRENDS

# ANNOUNCING



## BANKING FRONTIERS FINNOVITI 2023

📅 25 April, 2023 📍 Hotel Sahara Star, Mumbai

Banking Frontiers is pleased to announce the 12th edition of Finnoviti Awards and Conference 2023, themed “Encashing the Digital Explosion,” for the BFSI sector. The FINNOVITI 2023 Conference will recognize and honor innovations in the financial services industry. Calling all BFSI sector leaders who have stunned the industry with their inspiring Innovation to nominate now.

This year the conference will be all about building a digital financial enterprise and serving consumers where digital is fast penetrating as a hand-held journey or a full-fledged digital journey undertaken by consumers on their own.

Nominate Now for this Innovation Carnival: <https://lnkd.in/gbV8CnhZ>



THEME

## ENCASHING THE DIGITAL EXPLOSION

### SNAPS FROM FINNOVITI 2022







# BANKING FRONTIERS

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## Innovation always welcome

**A**pril marks the beginning of the new financial year – this is also the time that every financial institution look forward to newer things. And what better way to lay your hands on these new things than to create them yourself. That is the sweet reward of innovation.

April is when we will celebrate our biggest innovation festival – Finnoviti and Technoviti. The conference-cum-awards will be held on April 25 at Hotel Sahara Star, Mumbai. Our theme this year is 'Encashing the Digital Explosion' which reflects that the focus has shifted to the next stage - from doing the digital transformation as an internal exercise to extracting value from it as an ecosystem.

We are looking forward to exciting new nominations for both Finnoviti and Technoviti awards, and so are our esteemed jury members – they are the Who's Who of the BFSI sector. They have guided us with their wisdom and deep insights about the various invisible factors that play an important role.

We also have a galaxy of speakers and engaging topics of discussion. You will find all the details on the events tab on our website [www.bankingfrontiers.com](http://www.bankingfrontiers.com)

We also have a large number exhibitors and sponsors. This conference has always been a darling of the IT and fintech community as it gives an opportunity to showcase their newest offerings.

Looking at the turmoil in the financial markets in the west, I am indeed glad to see that the Indian financial system is moving ahead at a rapid pace and yet has maintained the much needed safeguards to protect itself from a variety of risk. Despite some dips, the sector has largely maintained the trust of the customers and the citizens, and made a huge positive contribution to the real economy.



## US Fed plans a new real-time payments system



The U.S. Federal Reserve is activating a real-time payments system in July, which marks a transition in a phase when the crypto sector's instant-transaction advantages are many. The FedNow Service, meant to solve the existing delays for clearing financial transactions between institutions, will begin certifying its first participants at the beginning of April. The system will operate around the clock and provide immediate, full access

to funds. FedNow is also a potential precursor to a central bank digital currency (CBDC).

## Nigeria to adopt open banking

Nigeria has become the first country in the African region to announce plans for open banking. The country's central bank, the Central Bank of Nigeria has issued operational guidelines for the purpose, outlining how banks and other financial institutions in country can access and share consumer data. The guidelines also outline minimum requirements, responsibilities and expectations from participants. An official of the central bank said the adoption of open banking in Nigeria will foster the sharing of customer-permissioned data between banks and third-party firms to enable the building of customer-focused products and services. The central bank had first begun work on the adoption of open banking in June 2017, and a regulatory framework was issued in February 2021.

## India, UAE to cooperate in innovation efforts

Reserve Bank of India and the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates have entered into a MoU to enhance cooperation and jointly enable innovation in financial products and services. Under the MoU, the two central banks will collaborate on various emerging areas of fintech, especially Central Bank Digital Currencies and explore interoperability between the CBDCs of the 2 central banks. The 2 entities will jointly conduct proof-of-concept and pilot(s) of bilateral CBDC bridge to facilitate cross-border CBDC transactions of remittances and trade, according to a statement by the RBI. It also said this bilateral engagement of testing cross-border use case of CBDCs is expected to reduce costs, increase efficiency of cross border transactions and further the economic ties between India and UAE.

## SWIFT completes testing of API-based CBDC project

Financial messaging platform SWIFT said it has completed a sandbox test for API-based central bank digital currency project, a collaborative project of 18 global banks, including central banks. The collaborative sandbox testing period lasted 12 weeks and involved almost 5000 simulated transactions between 2 different blockchain networks and with existing fiat-based payment systems. The proposed solution could support a seamless exchange of CBDCs, even those built on different platforms. Central banks will now receive access to a beta version of the solution that will allow them to conduct further testing. Participants in the testing phase included Banque de France, the Deutsche Bundesbank, the Monetary Authority of Singapore, HSBC, BNP Paribas, Intesa Sanpaolo, NatWest, Royal Bank of Canada, SMBC, Société Générale, Standard Chartered and UBS.

## Bangladesh to have a new system for interest rates

Bangladesh Bank proposes to remove the ceiling of the interest rates on lending and introduce a new market-based system - called interest reference rate corridor - which was first introduced in the Philippines with considerable success. The central bank's Governor Abdur Rouf Talukder said the bank has almost finalized the policy and would be introduced based on market-based reference. The introduction of such a system was part of the steps prescribed by the IMF.

## Britain may fix a limit for holding digital pound

Bank of England may fix a limit of 20,000 digital pounds for each person in the country if Britain decides to have digital currency, according to the central bank's Deputy Governor Jon Cunliffe. The country's government and the central bank are now in the process of finalizing the norms for introducing a digital pound, which according to reports will be held in a 'wallet' provided by banks. A final decision is yet to be taken. Cunliffe said the idea of to have a limit of between 10,000 pounds and 20,000 pounds per individual as the appropriate balance between managing risks and supporting wide usability of the digital pound. Money above the cap would be put into a customer's commercial bank account given that a digital pound would not be a means for storing wealth.

## China reappoints Yi Gang as Governor of PBOC

China has reappointed Yi Gang as Governor of People's Bank of China. The step is being described as a measure to have continuity at the top while other economic officials



change during a period of uncertainty. Yi, however, plays no role in making monetary policy. His duties are rather described as 'implementing monetary policy', or 'carrying out decisions made by a policymaking body' whose membership is a secret. However, the Governor is the most prominent Chinese figure in global finance and is in charge of reassuring bankers and investors, especially when China is coming out of a period of slower growth. Yi was first appointed Governor in March 2018, taking over from the highly regarded Zhou Xiaochuan. A career central banker, he had spent 20 years at the central bank after getting his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois and working as a professor of economics at Indiana University from 1986 to 1994.

## UBI: MACH Architecture to power next wave

Technology drives innovation, growth and competitive advantage:

**U**nion Bank of India, one of the leading public sector banks of the country, has a network of 8700+ domestic branches, 10,900+ ATMs, 16,200+ BC points serving over 153+ million customers. The bank has received several awards and recognition for its prowess in technology and digital banking.

A. Manimekhalai assumed charge as MD & CEO of the bank on June 3, 2022. A seasoned banker with experience of more than 3 decades, Manimekhalai started her career in erstwhile Vijaya Bank as an officer in 1988. Earlier she was Executive Director at Canara Bank. She played a pivotal role in effecting successful amalgamation of Canara Bank and Syndicate Bank.

She is a member of various committees and working groups constituted by Government of India, and has actively contributed towards policymaking relating to future road map of RRBs, financial inclusion, agriculture value-chain finance, BC issues, etc.

### AI, ML TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY

The banking app Union VYOM offers 350+ features. It has crossed more than 20 million of users and ₹18+ billion of digital business. The bank has also launched novel initiatives such as UVConn (a WhatsApp banking solution) and also a voice banking solution in its initial stage. As part of the Digital Business Technology Platform, the bank is focussed on digital transformation, including the use of mobile and web applications, to improve customer experience and streamline business operations.

To achieve this, the bank is implementing an open architecture platform based on MACH architecture and technology principles with high modularity. This will optimize business processes, enhance resilience and agility, and provide delightful customer experiences through digital channels, omni channel experience, hyper personalization, etc.

Manimekhalai indicates: “The platform will also leverage data-driven decisions and personalization using martech stack also. In the near future we shall be focussing



more on increasing the adoption of artificial intelligence, machine learning, and automation to improve efficiency and productivity, as well as tapping the potential of cloud & cybersecurity to enhance data storage and protection. Our goal is to leverage technology to drive innovation, growth, competitive advantage.”

### MORE DIGITAL LENDING

With the evolution of financial inclusion channels through internet banking and more recently through mobile based applications, banking facilities are now easily accessible to women. This has enabled masses including women to avail financial services which were otherwise available through physical visits to bank branches. It has also resulted in the increased demand of banking services more particularly debit cards, credit cards, credit-off take, investments, and other financial services.

Manimekhalai shared some key figures pertaining to period from Dec 2022 to March 2023: “The total number of women MSME borrowers has increased from 360,608 to 563,757. The percentage of such women MSME borrowers has increased from 20.49% to 28.12%. Likewise, the percentage share of women’s savings deposits has increased from 31.40% to 32.18%. The number of women SHGs

has increased from 579,622 to 678,012. The percentage of such women SHGs has increased from 85.42% to 89.87% during the period.”

The number of women credit card holders by Dec 2022 is 85,023, which is 14.76% of total credit card base.

The bank already has existing products which can be availed through digital modes. The availability of digital channels has immensely reduced the effort of visiting branches for women who are also having domestic responsibilities. Digital initiatives of UBI have contributed to increasing business, expand customer reach, improve customer engagement, enhanced brand visibility, increased efficiency and provide better data insights.

Manimekhalai reveals: “We are planning to move towards more digital lending. Women entrepreneurs can digitally apply for and get disbursement for up to ₹1 million under the Nari Shakti scheme. STP of Nari Shakti went live on 11 Nov 2022, with amount of disbursement being ₹15.5 million to 23 beneficiaries as of 4 March 2023.”

In the coming years, it is expected with the availability of online credit requirements based on cash accruals, credit history, etc, more and more women will be able to avail their credit requirements through these channels. Technology is the game changer.”

### ACCESSIBILITY INITIATIVES

Accessible Spaces are made available in UBI through JAWS screen readers and wheelchair ramps at workplaces. Manimekhalai claims: “We are pioneers in preparing JAWS manual for CBS. Project Union Access is an Employees with Disabilities (EWD) led project, committed to improve accessibility of digital spaces for customers and employees with disabilities. We have 2 industry first special eLearning modules - General Awareness on Disability Inclusion and Accessibility and Capacity Building module on digital accessibility. We provide special training programs with sign language interpreter.”

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## NeoGrowth: Transforming Learning into Innovation

Arun Nayyar, MD & CEO at NeoGrowth unravels the learning and innovation programs:

**Ravi Lalwani: Every organization has top-down learning programs, where an expert comes and trains the employees. At the same time, employees are learning things, especially when interacting with customers, and many of these learnings can be incorporated into new products, processes, etc. How are you leveraging this at NeoGrowth?**

**Arun Nayyar:** Knowing the customer's pulse in a dynamic world is not only important to offer relevant products and services to customers, but also forms a crucial part of the overall growth of a professional. NeoGrowth's deep customer connect provides key insights about India's MSMEs, which act as valuable tools in upskilling our employees. To ensure a continuous flow of customer insights, we have rolled out various channels of communication with our customers. One of which is the 'Voice of Customer' program initiated in 2019 where we gather insights through personal interactions with the front-end employees of in-house customer-facing departments such as sales, renewals, collections, and customer service. Since the front-end customer-facing teams have a detailed understanding of customer requirements, inputs from them help



**Arun Nayyar favours 'Neolideas' to recognize 'ideapreneurs'**

come up with relevant products or new product features.

**How is the company collecting this learning and converting it to innovation?**

To further encourage our employees, our flagship initiative, 'Ideathon', helps us drive a culture of innovation. As part of this initiative, the HR Head and respective

the function head jointly conduct workshops with all the employees. The list of ideas generated is shared with the respective department heads to weigh the feasibility of execution.

The selected ideas are closely tracked for closure. To strengthen this practice, since 2017, NeoGrowth has had a dedicated idea-sharing platform 'NeoIdeas', a forum for employees to share ideas and for the organization to recognize 'ideapreneurs'. A wide range of ideas has been incorporated along with the reward and recognition of the originator of ideas. We have often seen that the ideas received from this forum have helped substantiate the findings of industry research, giving us the voice of customer on newer product offerings, and process improvement opportunities with a 'voice of employee'.

The inputs gathered through such forums are analyzed for feasibility, and product and process improvements get identified for execution. This elaborate approach to drive customer centricity and innovation, which make two of NeoGrowth's core values, helps us maintain a competitive edge and build a stronger workforce.

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## Shaktikanta Das conferred 'Governor of the Year Award' for 2023

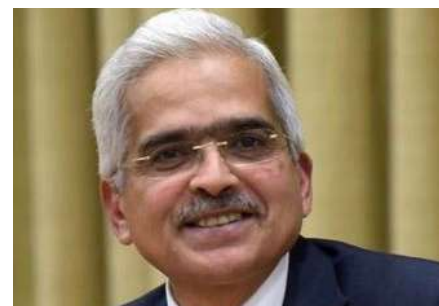
**S**haktikanta Das, the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, has been recognized with the 'Governor of the Year Award' for 2023 by Central Banking, a UK-based financial publisher that specializes in public policy and financial markets. Central Banking's focus is on central banks, international financial institutions, and financial market infrastructure and regulation.

According to the award citation, the RBI governor has cemented critical reforms, overseen world-leading payments innovation, and steered India through

difficult times with a steady hand and well-crafted turn of phrase.

Central Banking has presented the National Bank of Ukraine (NBU) with the 'Central Bank of the Year Award' for maintaining financial and macroeconomic stability in the face of extreme shocks.

The Central Banking Awards 2023 recognise excellence in a community that had faced significant policy and operational challenges amid heightened inflationary pressures, rapid technological change and environmental transition. Many institutions have also made



significant improvements in their governance, operations, communications, economics, currency, reserves and market infrastructure capabilities.

# Comedy sketches pull customers

Madhvi Gupta, Head of Marketing, Communications & Social Impact at IIFL Home Finance, dwells upon influencer marketing:

**Ravi Lalwani: Is the company using influencer marketing? For how long? Which customer segments are you targeting?**

**Madhvi Gupta:** IIFL Home Loans has been using influencer marketing for a year now. Our home loan caters to first-time home buyers from the EWS/LIG section of society and our secured business loan targets small business owners.

**Which social media platforms is the company focusing upon?**

IIFL Home Loans is active on all social media platforms with a different agenda for each platform. LinkedIn is majorly used to talk about the culture and vision of our company, different CSR initiatives that we have introduced, etc. It acts as a medium to interact with various stakeholders. It also allows long-format organizational branding communication.

For Twitter, we make sure that our page is updated with the latest industry as well as company news, regulatory updates, and trends. Also, it majorly acts as a customer redressal platform as many customers on Twitter post their queries/feedback.

We have a team to handle and address the same meticulously. Since most of our TG is on Facebook and Instagram, both platforms are used for reaching a wider audience with a core objective of brand awareness and engagement.

The strategy includes educational content that informs the audience about our various products and services. Inorganic campaigns are also run to achieve our umbrella objective of reaching a wider audience beyond organic performance.

YouTube is used for our event videos and also as a host for DIY/training videos for internal use.

**Have you used vernacular language for this activity?**

Yes. Having a customer base spread across the country in tier 2, 3 & 4 cities necessitates the use of vernacular languages. It is not just limited to influencer marketing, but we actively use it across our brand assets and marketing collaterals on our websites, apps, banners, flyers, etc.



Madhvi Gupta

**Who are the influencers and what customer segments do they connect with?**

The influencers range from content creators and dancers on Instagram to finance and loan educators on YouTube. They connect with similar customer segments like ours, including first-time home buyers from the EWS/LIG section of society and small business owners.

For our 100+ branch launch campaign, we used influencer marketing to reach our customer segments. The content creators on Instagram made comedy sketches that informed the audience about our quick home loan and secured business loan approval in 25 minutes. What made these videos stand out was that they were in the language that our customers speak. Similarly, finance and loan educators on YouTube like Manglesh Rao and the channel, Grow Your Money prepared videos like 'Five effective ways to get your loan approval instantly' and 'Fast Home Loan' to promote our product offerings.

**What are the other methods being used to target the same customer segments?**

We consider Google Ads and especially its various platforms like discover, display & YouTube based on various factors. First, the reach of these platforms is not just limited to search but the user's interest and their online behavior as well. This gives us an option of reaching out to the masses who reside in tier 2, 3 & 4 markets. We want to focus on hyper personal targeting and hence we target using pin codes, which is done at the regional level leveraging platforms like YouTube, display & discovery to penetrate the core message deep into these markets.

Facebook/Insta ads, Moj/Sharechat, and several ATL marketing methods like TV, radio, newspapers, etc, are also used to reach a wider audience. Whenever we pick ATL methods, we keep factors like reach, language, channel effectiveness, and TG geography in mind. We also use several BTL channels like branding, merchandising, sponsorship, public relations and exhibitions.

**What are your key criteria for selecting an influencer? What are your criteria for avoiding/minimizing the risk associated with any influencer?**

The selection of an influencer majorly depends on whether the influencer/content creator communicates/engages with our customer segment. For the quality/audience base of the content, we refer to previously collaborated content of the influencers and metrics like their total follower's base, average views, and engagement rate.

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Some of the influencer profiles that IIFL Home Loans has collaborated with and the content they produced			
Name	Followers	Genre	Average Views
Nainika	7,14,000	Dance	618,000
Niranjan	1,20,000	Content Creator	132,140
Mandy	75,800	Content Creator	369,000
Grow your Money	6,65,009	Finance/ Loan Educator	75,890
Manglesh Rao	1,62,347	Loan Educator	32,469

# AI, ML could shape Liquidity Management

RBI can do a world of good to create a more robust environment for NBFCs on liquidity side:

**T**he world over there have been increasing concerns about cash flow liquidity risk and market liquidity risk in the volatile global scenario marred by war, natural calamities, supply chain disruptions, geopolitical rivalry, etc. It is a common knowledge that stable environment offers a stable and predictable liquidity scenario, stable interest rate scenario and offer lower risks both on liquidity and interest rates. However, this is a mirage one should stop chasing. With each passing day, financial world of the whole universe is getting more and more interlinked and interdependent.

Considering the world, all are living in, it should be safely presumed that only certainty is uncertainty. The world is moving from a bipolar world to multipolar world and over and above that on one thing on whom no one has any control is 'Mother Nature'. Kishore Lodha, Chief Financial Officer, U GRO Capital, hints: "So, we should remain prepared for more and more global conflicts, small- and large-scale wars and over and above that small-scale and large-scale natural calamities. It will always keep the cashflow, liquidity and interest rates in an uncertain zone."

Thankfully central banks across the globe are taking steps to minimize the risks of any of such eventuality. Central banks, and more specially RBI, are far more prepared now to deal with any geopolitical event or a natural calamity. A case in point is covid. The way world across, entire cash flow system, liquidity and interest rates were managed by most of the impactful countries, speaks volumes about preparedness of the world to deal with such eventualities. Kishore alerts: "Collateral damages are bound



**Kishore Lodha alerts that collateral damages are bound to happen, and it will keep the whole economic environment vulnerable, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous**

to happen, and it will keep the whole economic environment vulnerable, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous."

## **ROBUST ENVIRONMENT FOR NBFCs**

The whole financial system which has been designed by RBI in consultation with GOI is far more robust compared to most other countries in the world. Now NBFCs are dispensing roughly about 20% of total formal credit in India. RBI has taken many steps in recent years to make the system stronger for NBFCs as well. Scale based framework, LCR (liquidity coverage ratio) requirement, ALM (Asset Liability Management) monitoring on a regular basis are some the steps taken by RBI that will reduce the liquidity risk for

NBFCs but all of it will come with a cost.

Today most NBFCs are far more aware about ALM mismatches than 5 years back. A clear sign is lower reliance of NBFCs on commercial papers. Though it offers a good rate arbitrage, it is negative on ALM. Kishore points out: "Hence overall CPs for NBFCs have gone down from 15% in total borrowing to about 7% now, in a matter of only 4 years."

But regulator probably is expected to do a little more for NBFCs. Kishore suggests: "If a window can be opened by RBI to freely park surplus funds on NBFCs with a designate intermediary and also allow to make temporary borrowings against free assets, it will do a world of good to create a more robust environment for NBFCs on liquidity side."

## **DATA QUALITY FOR FORECASTING**

Many kinds of risks can be forecasted with available data. It is necessary to know about quality and quantity of data available for liquidity forecasting. Kishore informs: "Availability of data helps in predicting the overall market scenarios on liquidity and interest rates. A lot of data is freely available these days, which gives good indication of what is in store in near future. It helps financiers to make their strategies accordingly and also mobilize their resources to mitigate any potential risk."

## **TOO MUCH DATA NOT REQUIRED**

There are certain aspects of liquidity risk management, which are algorithmic and other aspects, which are expertise/wisdom. Algorithmic approach towards liquidity risk management is good to hear, but those who have spent some time in these markets are generally



aware that what is coming on liquidity and interest rate side unless it's a covid kind of situation. Central bank, world forums like IMF, monetary policies of respective countries and a lot of raw data on availability of liquidity, sectoral allocations and foreseeable events are freely available to anyone who wants to see it, go through it and make some plans around it. Kishore firmly feels: "It does not require too much data science at the entity level to gaze market outlooks."

As of now the major challenge on these sides from a financier's point of view are governance, eye on ALM management and creating some buffers, even at the cost of sacrificing some profits. Kishore

believes: "For an NBFC, if governance is good, ALM is genuinely well managed. To have the appetite to create a reasonable buffer of liquidity, it does not require too much of external or internal intelligence to manage liquidity risk."

### ROLE OF AI & ML FOR NBFCs

It is interesting to understand how AI (artificial intelligence) and ML (machine learning) are improving liquidity risk management in NBFC space in India is mostly driven by Board driven policies, quality of governance and a clear and transparent view on ALM. Kishore observes: "AI and ML are not playing

much role for NBFCs in liquidity risk management. However, for larger universe, for people who are involved with monetary policy of the country, both AI and ML does play an important role."

There are several macro and micro factors involved in overall liquidity management, where AI and ML can play very important role. Let us take a broad example. Kishore further cites: "A prediction of monsoon is also a machine learning and artificial intelligence, which has a huge impact on the overall economic scenario and also has impact on the overall liquidity management of the system."

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## Digitalisation of international trade will reduce cost of finance: Experts

**D**igitization of international trade could be an efficient way to reduce costs in trade and trade financing. In the coming years, all nations should endeavor to adopt enabling legislation to achieve paperless international trade.

These were the two major recommendations of the panelists at an international conference on cooperation on trade finance among the G20 member countries, organized by the ministry of commerce and industry on Tuesday in Mumbai. The event was hosted by the ECGC and India EXIM Bank on the sidelines of the 1st G20 Trade and Investment Working Group (TIWG) Meeting. Delegates from the member countries, industry, and academic experts from across the world were present at the conference to engage in constructive dialogue and exchange of ideas in the domain of trade finance.

Sunil Barthwal, Commerce Secretary, in his keynote address, highlighted that it is the right time to discuss the issues facing trade finance and possible solutions. The universal message from all the speakers at the conference highlighted the necessity of trade for ensuring prosperity for all and that inclusive trade finance is key to achieving this target. The challenges to be addressed in digitalizing trade were identified as international cooperation in harmonizing



definitions, standards, and data sharing across borders digitally.

Two-panel discussions were organized as part of the event consisting of international experts. The first panel discussed the role of banks, financial institutions, development finance institutions, and Export Credit Agencies to identify the gaps and address the challenges in the trade finance arena amidst the uncertain global trade landscape. The second panel focused on accelerating digitalization and fintech solutions for improving access to trade finance. The session also delved into the current and

emerging fintech technologies for making more customized lending decisions and enhancing trade finance supply for MSMEs.

While estimates suggest that the traditional trade finance gap is currently around USD 2 trillion, bridging the gap needs more players, including multilateral development banks and Export Credit Agencies (ECAs) to increase their participation. The evolution of fintechs and account aggregators in the ecosystem enables transaction risk evaluation based on real-time data. This will enable cost-effective appraisal by trade finance providers.

# Fostering a culture of growth & development

Blended training programs offer a highly engaging and effective approach to learning that helps organizations to maximize impact:

**H**R in many big companies train various functional teams such as IT, finance, compliance, legal, operations, etc, about business vocabulary and language. To ensure that everyone in its organization is speaking the same lexicon and on the same page, Liberty General Insurance offers training on business communication to various functional teams such as IT, finance, compliance, legal, operations, and HR. Priya Vasudevan, President HR, expands: “This training can include improving written and verbal communication skills, as well as learning industry-specific terminology. Additionally, we provide training on how to create effective narratives and tell engaging stories to shape mindsets and influence business outcomes. This helps us build a culture of clear and effective communication that helps us achieve our goals.”

## MEASURE PROGRESS, TAILOR PROG

Measuring progress through pre-training and post-training assessments is an effective way to evaluate the effectiveness of a training program. Before starting a training program, Liberty General Insurance usually assesses participants to establish a baseline of their knowledge, skills, and abilities in the subject area. This baseline serves as a reference point to track progress and improvement throughout the training program. After the training program is completed, Liberty GI conducts post-training assessments to determine the extent to which participants have increased their knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Priya elaborates: “These assessments can take different forms, such as quizzes, tests, projects, or manager observations.



**Priya Vasudevan aims to create a workplace that is not only more diverse but also more supportive, empowering, and ultimately more successful**

By analyzing the results of both pre- & post-training assessments, we can identify the strengths and weaknesses of the training program and make necessary adjustments for improvement. This approach also helps us to tailor the training program to meet the specific needs of individual participants or groups for maximum impact.”

## STRONG INCLINATION FOR TECH

To ensure it has the right talent to support its business growth, Liberty GI focuses its recruitment efforts on certain key functions such as distribution, claims, underwriting, and technology. When considering potential candidates, the company prioritizes those who have

demonstrated career stability, as this indicates a track record of dedication and commitment. Priya adds: “Additionally, we seek out candidates who have a proven ability to make an impact in their previous roles, as well as those who are comfortable with data and analytics and have a strong inclination for technology.”

The company’s focus on these specific criteria helps it to identify candidates, who are not only well-suited to the specific demands of its business but also possess the skills and experience necessary to drive innovation and growth. Priya adds: “By selecting candidates who possess these qualities, we are better able to build a strong and effective team that can adapt to changing market conditions and meet the evolving needs of our customers.”

Liberty General Insurance believes that investing in the development and growth of its employees is a critical component of its success. To ensure that it hires individuals who have the potential to succeed in the organization, it uses a psychometric test called Predictive Index to assess candidates’ behavioral traits. Priya points out: “We compare them to a benchmark level of those traits that successful Liberty employees demonstrate.”

## NURTURE ASPIRATIONS

For employees who are at senior job bands or who are recommended for promotions, the company has a Development Centre. This centre is designed to assess participants for the next level of responsibility by providing them with individual and group tasks to complete. Trained assessors observe the participants across various tasks and exercises, taking note of their observations

against Liberty competencies. Based on their observations, assessors provide feedback to each participant on strengths and areas for development. These areas are then worked on by the participant and their manager through a structured development journey that spans a 3-year horizon.

Priya adds: “This process ensures that we consistently and patiently nurture our employees to achieve their career aspirations rather than just developing or promoting them and moving on. By investing in our employees in this manner, we help to foster a culture of growth and development that is essential to our long-term success with a team of people who are well-equipped to meet the evolving needs of our business and our customers.”

## **BLENDED LEARNING**

Liberty General Insurance is seeing a growing trend in the use of blended training programs. These programs offer a highly effective approach to learning that combines a range of different methods, including self-paced learning, instructor-led discussions, and projects/assignments. One of the key benefits of blended learning is that it

provides participants with a flexible and personalized approach to learning. This is especially important when working with a diverse group of employees who have different learning styles and preferences. Priya bifurcates: “Self-paced learning is great for those who prefer to work independently, while instructor-led discussions allow participants to engage with experts and peers and deepen their understanding of the course material.”

Projects and assignments are also an essential part of a blended training program. They provide participants with the opportunity to apply their new knowledge and skills in a practical context, which can be highly effective in helping them retain information and develop problem-solving skills. At the end of the day, blended training programs offer a highly engaging and effective approach to learning that can help organizations to maximize the impact of their training efforts. Priya feels: “By providing participants with a range of different learning methods and tailoring the training to their specific needs and preferences, we can ensure that our employees are fully engaged and invested in the learning process, which is key to driving successful business outcomes.”

**L**iberty General Insurance was established in 2013 with the aim of providing comprehensive retail, commercial and industrial insurance solutions. It has 1200+ employees and 110 offices in 95 cities across 29 states. Its partner network consists of about 5000+ hospitals and 4000+ auto service centres.

Priya Vasudevan, President, Human Resources, Liberty General Insurance has over 20 years of rich work experience, much of it in leadership roles across various reputed organisations and diverse sectors. Priya is a certified OD (organizational development) practitioner from Indian Society of Applied Behavioural Sciences (ISABS) and holds an MBA in HR from Mumbai University.

## **ACTIVE ALLIES, DEI EFFORTS**

Liberty General Insurance firmly believes that creating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplace is not just the responsibility of one particular group. It is essential that the company engages everyone in the organization to ensure that it makes real progress toward achieving gender diversity and inclusion.

As part of its DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) efforts, the company recognizes that it is critical to have the support and active participation of everyone in its ecosystem - including men. Priya underlines: “This means that our male colleagues and managers play a vital role in serving as Active Allies to support and advocate for women in our organization.”

Liberty General Insurance is committed to fostering a workplace culture that values diversity and encourages collaboration and inclusivity at all levels of the organization. Priya adds: “By engaging everyone in this effort, we believe that we can create a workplace that is not only more diverse but also more supportive, empowering, and ultimately more successful.”

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## **WEGrow To Support Women**

**L**iberty General Insurance is committed to continuously improving and evolving its policies and practices to support the needs and aspirations of all of its employees. The company believes that its hybrid working model - Flexiworking - is a real competitive advantage in attracting talent. It has found that many of its employees, particularly women, value the flexibility that this model offers and often base their decision to join the organization on this benefit. Priya says: “To capitalize on this advantage, we have been working hard to fine-tune our management practices to ensure that our managers are fully equipped to lead and manage in a hybrid work environment.”

However, Liberty GI is aware that it still has work to do regarding gender diversity, particularly in its mid-junior job bands. To address this, the company recently introduced the WEGrow program, designed to identify and support high-performing women in the organization. Through this program, it aims to provide women with the tools, resources, and development opportunities they need to advance their careers and ultimately take on leadership roles within the company. Priya indicates: “By offering structured development journeys as a cohort, we believe that WEGrow will help to create a supportive and empowering environment for women to grow and develop their skills. We see this initiative as a key part of our efforts to attract and retain the best talent.”



# Mental health is still a dominant risk

Sunder Natarajan, CRO at IndiaFirst Life Insurance, deep dives into risk associated with WFH, startups & emerging technologies and people issues:

**Ravi Lalwani: Risks associated with WFH – how has been the actual experience vis-à-vis the expectations?**

**Sunder Natarajan:** Every risk has two sides to it, not necessarily with a 50% chance of upside or otherwise. The degree keeps varying with changing circumstances. WFH is no different. It has seen a rapid rise with easy access to mobility and has of course got accelerated during and after the pandemic. For a 360 degree view on this, we can classify this by key stakeholders which could at a bare minimum be the employer, employee, and the customer. There could be larger stakeholders like the supply chain, industry, regulator, nation, and the world at large. In light of this target audience, we will restrict the perspective to BFSI and key stakeholders.

**Employer:** Most measurable risks would fold up to the risk of attrition and productivity lift or dip from a people point of view. In a connected world, a good chunk would be information security and data leakage and privacy related risks.

**Employee:** The biggest measurable risk would be net savings which would depend upon a personal productivity lift or dip and drop - in travel time and cost. The biggest elephant in the room is blurring of personal and professional timelines and goal posts leading to a strain in relationships all-round, and an eventual impact on physical and mental health. And this could work both ways.

**Customer:** The king/queen is the eventual beneficiary irrespective of where the goods or services are manufactured / offered with a distinct possibility of initial teething issues. The relevance of NPS has only gone up in the WFH world.

A robust risk management framework will help an organization manage a WFH ecosystem and leverage the same for benefit to all stakeholders. A traditional Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) for a new project in this era looks beyond top-line,



## Sunder Natarajan suggest robust risk management framework for WFH challenges

bottom-line and customer satisfaction and views risks and governance as factors to take a decision. With a rise in entrepreneurial spirit, the gig economy is being embraced and augurs well for all.

**What policies and practices have you adopted to mitigate risks associated with start-ups?**

A company which is 13 years old in an industry where a policyholder life cycle spans a few decades is akin to a start-up (across the world are half a century or more is like a start-up). IndiaFirst Life has been blessed with a rich legacy of promoters from whom we have imbibed an ethos of good governance. Risk management within our organization is therefore an integral part of our business and effective management of risk is essential to achieve our strategic and business objectives.

An Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework policy helps the company to identify, assess, and mitigate our key business risks. The

risk management activities consider insurance, business, credit and investment, operational risks, which includes strategic risk, insurance risk, operational risk, investment / market risk, credit risk, fraud risk, information security risk, compliance risk and business continuity management. The key focus areas of our risk management framework includes (i) strategic risk assessment; (ii) governance; (iii) risk universe; and (iv) risk awareness.

A top-down approach with a robust steer from the risk management committee of the board and a strong tone at the top by the leadership guides the company to take risk-based decisions and is supported by a bottom-up team of certified risk experts across the enterprise who are risk ambassadors in their respective function. The risk management team led by the CRO is vested with the responsibility of implementing ERM across the company.

A risk appetite statement and established tolerance limits across defined risks helps operationalize the risk management framework effectively. The second line is supported by the third line, which offers assurance to the board by testing the design and effectiveness of internal controls. The risk framework thus established can offer resilience as it has been built gradually where the policy has been converted to a well-oiled practice. As the company matures, this would need further evolution to be better prepared.

**Having mapped the risks associated with emerging technologies like API, RPA, AI, ML, etc., what patterns have you observed?**

While APIs enable a business to make use of the functions and data of others and cancels out the need to create those features in-house, they can be a hackers delight and provide access to vital information. While most companies

use firewalls to protect their system from hackers, a diluted API security strategy can make it easy for the hackers to enter the software through the backgate. Failure to identify and track all API endpoints within their mobile or web apps or implement adequate controls to authenticate and verify API calls enhances the chances of unauthorized access, data breaches, exposure of data or account takeover

Robotic Process Automation (RPA) helps hasten repetitive tasks and brings in consistency of delivery and also reduces the cost of the process. While simple tasks are easy, documenting a process, coding it for automation and ensuring that all possible scenarios are envisaged is not as easy as it sounds.

Errors, apart from causing heartburn for the user also result into cancelling the cost advantage if there are frequent changes done. They also have to adapt to an ever changing business environment. While a good business requirement document is key, poor execution, wrong tool selection and post production support by the partner can be big challenges.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) & Machine Learning (ML) have become an integral part of several processes today and start nascent and mature only over time. Poor quality of underlying data can lead to a biased outcome. Incomplete, archaic, inconsistent or duplicate data may result in an inaccurate ML algorithm and impact output or experience. It is sometimes difficult to decipher the algorithms decision making. Further, with data being picked from a variety of sources, the risk of data privacy violation is a tight rope walk between what adds value to the customer and what infringes on their rights.

Data laws and implementation of the same are nascent as of now. The common man has to constantly keep improving his/her knowledge to data privacy for self-protection. An increasingly digital world also means that a lot of activities which were done by a vendor are now executed by the customer themselves. Several awareness programs run by regulators



like IRDAI, SEBI and RBI and GOI are aimed to educating customers and we are likely to experience an increase in their intensity in the foreseeable future.

### **What has been your experience with using technology to mitigate risks arising out of technology momentum?**

The third wave predicted by Alvin Toffler in 1980 has passed by followed by a tsunami of changes in the realm of technology. A diamond is needed to cut another and cutting edge technology is essential to mitigate tech risks. We can take the examples of security and access.

Security is critical to any business as all of them have sensitive information and failure to keep them secure could result in potentially disastrous events if the wrong people get their hands on it. Loss of physical files, confidential information stored in any form or device can have an unprecedented impact. Technology can ensure information access is graded by need, relevance and hierarchy. Unique passwords and codes and an emerging culture of protecting files laden with sensitive information are changes being experienced now.

Access is also often misused and sometimes hacked easily. Biometrics and facial recognition are now widely getting used across industries to keep sensitive information safe. Even facial recognition can prevent the theft of data leading to operational risks. Fear of detection is also creating a barrier for malicious behaviour as most activities leave an audit trail.

Use of multiple application also result into information being scattered and not sometimes not updated. Software and cloud-based technologies can now allow management to access real-time

information right away from anywhere and help aid quick decision making help them stay nimble footed.

### **Are you looking at risks associated with emotional issues like frustration, depression, isolation, alienation, resentment, etc? Please give an overview of the mitigation plan.**

Mental health is one of the understated challenges of the century so far. Its difficult to detect, assess, diagnose and cure. If we were to treat it like a business exception or challenge, we do not yet have a root cause analysis (RCA), corrective action is random and preventive action is hard to find.

Potential RCA could be a increasingly nuclear society living in an information age and working in a connected world with reducing physical interaction.

Being aware and prepared can be form the basis of a mitigation plan. Setting up listening posts and helplines for employees to reach out discretely, encouraging skip level conversations, leadership outreach to frontline, encouraging leave replenishment, enriched job roles which hold an appeal to the soul and the intellect, and encouraging some fun at work are some ways to overcome the risks.

### **What risk management frameworks do you expect to put in place as and when crypto-currencies become legal and start gaining traction?**

This is a domain which is less understood, highly complex, not regulated in most parts of the world and literally a hot potato to handle. Hence, it is difficult to comment on it.

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# 40 insights into spending habits

Bank of Ireland considers cloud, AI, data and APIs as the 4 basic pillars in its forward-looking strategy:

**B**ank of Ireland, a part of Bank of Ireland Group, and a commercial and merchandizing bank, is the largest and oldest bank in Ireland. Headquartered in Dublin, it is one of the Big Four Irish banks and is serving 2 million consumer and business customers offering digital, branch and phone banking channels. It has some 9000 employees and its net income in 2022 stood at €1345 million.

The bank has a strong technology foundation today, having understood well in time the crucial role of technology in reducing costs, in becoming more efficient, and in growing the business by offering customers exactly what they are looking for. The bank has been able to achieve a lot of cost reduction by being more efficient - like a customer can open a current account on a mobile phone in just 6 minutes. One of the bank's unique products is insurance wallets and more than half of the general insurance business is done through these wallets.

## FULLY TECH-EQUIPPED

The bank today has everything that a digital system of banking requires - AI, cloud, big data and APIs. It could create an agile environment to manage data using the cloud. AI is expeditiously used to reduce costs. It also considers cloud, AI, data and APIs as the 4 basic pillars of its forward-looking banking strategy.

## TOOL FOR INVESTMENT CUSTOMERS

The bank has introduced a digital advice and transaction platform for investment customers. The platform has become an online one-stop-shop for customers to research and open an investment plan tailored to their individual risk profile. They can save from as little as €100 per month using the platform. Similarly, it carried out one of the largest customer migrations when some 2.1 million customers moved to a new platform for debit card and ATM transactions, providing more stable systems. It has also modernized its

payments infrastructure and automated over 100 processes to improve the customer experience.

The bank has recently implemented a Downstream User Table, which identifies the maturity journey of a cohort of machine learning models implemented for customer propensity modelling. The aim is to offer a single view of validated, accurate and ready to use output for downstream users for a variety of purposes with the technology.

The bank has also introduced a new mobile app, which is an updated version with capabilities of personalization. The new app makes day-to-day banking experience of customers easier by adding all the features of the desktop platform like downloading up to 7 years of statements, checking transactions in progress, managing direct debits and standing orders and change in contact details. Besides, it has a security system under the Strong Customer Authentication.

## GETTING INSIGHTS

The bank added a new digital service - Mi 365, or Money Insights 365 - which offers customers more than 40 insights into their spending habits. The service is available to all personal customers on the bank's mobile app. Using the service, customers can access personalised insights on their spending, including average monthly spend with particular retailers, track money in and out, including unexpected payments or refunds, review cash flow spend data on their account for up to six months and spot changes in spending they might need to keep an eye on, for example on groceries, clothing or entertainment.

The bank's technology modernization program - Project Omega - started in 2016 and was planned to last 5 years at a cost of around €500 million. The budget was enhanced to €900 million in 2018, and by the time the implementation was reaching its final stages, the costs have crossed €2 billion. Having undergone a 'material restructure', it is today a fully technology-



Bank of Ireland

enabled bank. There are half a million logins to the bank's mobile app every day. More than 80% of its loans to farmers happen online or by phone. And contactless transactions have gone up by millions touching 366 million in a year in 2022.

The bank is using Transact from Temenos as its core banking system.

This restructuring exercise has resulted in some major shift in focus for the bank - like it is more into mortgages and car finances now.

## NEW TECH ROLES

Very recently, the bank announced that it has created some 100 technology-based roles as it plans to scale up the number of critical digital projects across the group. These new roles consist of cloud platform and data infrastructure engineers, cybersecurity experts, business analysts and project managers. Some of the job areas defined for the new recruits are developing new customer features on digital channels, the group's cloud strategy, cyber-threat protection and advanced data analytics.

It had recruited some 230 tech specialists since 2021 as it achieved a rare distinction of having digitized more than 90% of its everyday product applications.

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This article has been compiled based on publicly available information on the web, particularly the bank's own website.



## Branch is the bank at Svenska Handelsbanken

Swedish bank Svenska Handelsbanken strongly believes that personal interaction is the key to successful customer engagement:

**W**hile banks in general adopt digitization as a means of bringing in efficiency, create better customer engagement and improve earnings, Swedish bank Svenska Handelsbanken approached it more as an opportunity to make use of alternate channels more effectively to conduct business transactions with customers. Its business model is built around the need to be available locally and to be able to do business with customers, regardless of the channel that the customers opt for. The theme is therefore to be digital and local.

Established in 1871, Handelsbanken is one of the major banks in Scandinavia and Europe. It has some 12,000 employees working in 800 branches in over 20 countries. Headquartered in Stockholm, it has strong presence in Sweden, the UK, Norway, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, the US, China, Singapore, Germany, France and Poland. The bank offers private, corporate banking solutions, serving individuals, corporate, SMEs, HNIs, and wealthy family clients.

### LOCAL RELATIONSHIP BANK

In spite of its multinational nature of operations, the bank is essentially a local relationship bank. It believes that having a wide network of branches enables its advisors to have a better knowledge of the local markets, and a deeper and more personal connection with the customers, which in turn generates more business and more profits. It also lays stress on deeply understanding its customers, for this understanding can generate more profits. So, digitization for one thing, has not reduced the number of branches. On the contrary, branches have been strengthened and equipped with digital tools to understand the customers' needs and meet them expeditiously.

The bank has highly decentralized operations. For it, 'branch is the bank'. Each branch operates as a local business and is empowered to make the majority of banking decisions, giving it more flexibility

to adapt to the local conditions and better relate to the customers. For customers, there are dedicated account managers who have expertise to help a customer make decisions based on financial requirements. Naturally, it is also important for the bank to provide a positive experience of the digital channels as well, since the majority of the customers handle their transactions there.

Unlike other banks taking up digital transformation, Handelsbanken considers the combination of digital tools and personal/local interaction as the true creator of value for the customers. And this is one of the distinguishing factors for the bank as in normal terms banks totally go for digital channels.

### UNIQUE PHONE BANK APP

The bank has a phone bank app, which is an e-banking solution and the bank is keen on promoting this. What is unique about the app is that a customer accessing the app, gets a four-digit code and along with one's social security number, one can log in. There is no need for any mobile bank id or password or OTP. Once logged in, the customer can speak to the bank officer, who is equipped to solve most of the likely issues.

The bank uses AI extensively. At the bank, AI is 'Augmented Intelligence'. It makes use of AI in a major manner in offering investment advice. It has developed a tool based on IBM Watson to take care of the increased advisory business, which means reviewing more documents. The tool combines the capability of AI to assess and analyze text with NLP and the human capability to understand context and complexity to create the most efficient output.

### LOCALISM A WINNER

It is a unique achievement for the bank that it has been consistently ranked No 1 in customer satisfaction for the last several years. Essentially, this is on account of the bank's 'localism' policy. The bank does not have call centers or major marketing



Svenska Handelsbanken Head Office

campaigns. A customer, whether he visits a bank branch or goes online, is always given a bespoke service that directly addresses his individual needs and financial situation.

The bank has a unique policy. It does not pay bonuses or offer financial incentives to performers or set targets for its people. Instead, the managers and staff are told to take care of the needs of the customers in a most effective manner. Monetary rewards are offered to all in the form of equal share of profits when the bank's return on equity beats the competitors'.

So, is it not difficult to drive digitization in such an environment? The bank has successfully structured its transformation based on which decisions to be taken locally and which at the central level. It has overcome this dilemma by making transparency as a key element.

Nevertheless, the bank has recently announced that it would cut its branch network in Sweden, without affecting the existing levels of customer satisfaction. It depends on digital to take care of this aspect. It proposes to invest SEK1 billion (€87 million) in IT to take its digital customer offering to an entirely new level.

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This article has been compiled based on publicly available information on the web, particularly the bank's own website.

## Statistical models bring objectivity & scalability

AP Factors personalizes MSMEs' product offerings to satisfy customers using machine learning techniques and data analytics:

**F**actoring is especially important in situations involving small-ticket loans, which MSMEs prefer for a quick infusion of cash. Arth Padarth Factors & Finance (AP Factors) is the 7th factoring NBFC in India, which addresses the large MSME segment through factoring of high-quality corporate receivables. Its portfolio includes vendor finance, dealer finance, receivable factoring and MSME finance. AP Factors is the NBFC factoring arm of Artfine Group, which is a specialist structuring firm.

TCA Arvind Rangarajan is a Co-founder of AP Factors. He spent over 9 years in Standard Chartered Bank, Barclays Bank, Deutsche bank and World Bank.



### VALUE IN INVOICES UP 1000%

AP Factors positions supply chain financing as an asset class for capital markets alongside commercial vehicle (CV) pools and microfinance. The invoice discounting facility at AP Factors includes both anchored and vendor-led financing programs. As an NBFC factor, the company purchases receivables from MSMEs, so this does not appear as debt in their books. AP Factors began operations in February 2022.

TCA Arvind Rangarajan, Co-founder, updates: "We processed close to 22 invoices in the first month. By the end of 2022, we will have processed an average of 150 invoices per month, representing a multi fold increase (approximately 7x). We have also witnessed a whopping 1000% increase in throughput / value of invoices that were discounted, which amounts to ₹20 million by the end of 2022."

### ML, ANALYTICS FOR CUSTOMERS

Unlike other NBFCs and banks, where the process is slowed by extensive legal documentation, AP Factors' process has a faster turnaround time because it is unsecured funding. The company has impacted over 700 vendors and dealers, primarily in the MSME sector. It already has a healthy pipeline of high-quality

### TCA Arvind Rangarajan is aiming to grow AP Factors' business by 5x in the next FY

corporate receivables from its customer base validating its journey of credit inclusion for MSME. Its procedures are designed to allow businesses to expand without significantly increasing their manpower. The pent-up demand during the covid times presented the company with opportunities in some sectors, that desperately sought digitization.

AP Factors sees MSME demand from industries such as laptops and electronic components, as well as MSME supply to e-commerce websites. Rangarajan elaborates: "We personalize MSMEs' product offerings to meet the needs of their customers using machine learning techniques and data analytics. Because most of our processes are digital, we can process remotely without disrupting our operations in the event of an emergency. We are able to achieve this growth with invoice discounting platform ArtfineBilz and process automation tools."

### AI, BOTS, SOFTWARE CODE

A strong technology ecosystem in India for financial services will be a catalyst of

MSME lending in the coming years. New-age NBFCs are increasingly leveraging analytics and data science for credit decisioning to speed up the loan process for MSMEs, making credit more inclusive. Assessment of creditworthiness by data-based statistical models brings objectivity, making the underwriting process scalable. AP Factors uses AI and bots to match GST to ledgers to bank statements to get an idea of the track record of sales and collections of an MSME. AI software automates routine tasks.

Rangarajan explains: "It checks the portal to ensure each invoice is scheduled for payment and downloading the CSV files with screenshots. The bot learns the actions and repeatedly performs them. Software code will parse this data to check payments, upload the invoice status on the system, with opening any new invoices on the portal. This expedites the procedures. improves the overall experience."

The company has only 1 office with about 20 employees, and does business all over India. Its key IT partners include Erutech, Ramsun, Fintheon and Cygnet.

### TARGETS, PLANS

The platforms AP Factors and ArtfinBilz have been working to democratize small and medium-sized enterprise working capital funding by converting and distributing supply chain finance through the issuance of debt capital market instruments (Pass-through-Certificates & Bonds/CP), thereby providing investors with alternate high yield investment opportunities. Rangarajan reveals: "We plan to assess more accurately the creditworthiness of MSMEs with quick TAT. We have developed credit evaluation procedures and risk management skills. Our immediate plans are to grow for the current FY with an AUM of around ₹2 billions and cash breakeven. If this momentum continues, we will grow our business by 5x in our second year of operations."

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## AI, ML improve LRM by cash flow forecasting

Balance the use of mathematical models and data-driven analysis to manage liquidity risk:

**R**aghnall Insurance Broking & Risk Management (RIBRM) helps its clients and their employees grow their business, wealth and health by protecting and managing their business and personal risks. Its areas of specialization include insurance, reinsurance, risk management and other related specialties. Ragnall serves large commercial, MSMEs, start-ups and individual clients with data-driven risk solutions and advisory services to grow their business.

Amit Goel, Director & Principal Officer at Ragnall Insurance Broking & Risk Management, as an insurance professional is determined to find opportunity in risk. He gets his goosebumps thinking about the extreme underpenetration of insurance in India and the opportunity it represents.

### WAYS TO MITIGATE RISKS

In the current volatile global scenario, the main concerns of Ragnall regarding cash flow and liquidity risk are the potential impact on its clients' financial stability. RIBRM's aim is to provide proactive risk management solutions to its clients that take into account their specific needs and requirements. Disruptions in cash flows due to supply chain disruptions, delayed payments from clients, and reduced demand for goods and services can lead to a shortage of funds, making it difficult for the clients to meet their obligations. This, in turn, can affect their overall financial health.

Additionally, market liquidity risk impacts investment portfolios, making it difficult for them to sell their assets at fair prices, leading to losses. Amit Goel elaborates: "Factors such as war, natural calamities, supply chain disruptions, and geopolitical rivalry can create uncertainties that exacerbate cash flow and liquidity risks. We closely monitor the global scenario and advise our clients on ways to manage, mitigate these risks. We work with insurers to develop customized insurance products that can provide coverage for these risks, ensure our clients' financial stability."



**Amit Goel points out that Business Cyber Shield is designed to be scalable, so it can be customised to meet the needs of SMEs to large corporations**

### DATA QUALITY, QUANTITY

Quality and quantity of data are important parameters, that have to be considered for liquidity forecasting. Goel points out: "Many kinds of risks can be forecasted with available data. The quality and quantity of data available for liquidity forecasting can vary depending on the institution and the data sources it uses. Institutions need to ensure that they have access to high-quality, relevant, and up-to-date data to make accurate liquidity forecasts."

### RISK: ALGORITHMIC, EXPERTISE

Certain aspects of liquidity risk management (LRM) are algorithmic and some aspects are expertise/wisdom. Goel observes: "Overall, liquidity risk management requires a combination of algorithmic approaches and expertise-based approaches to identify, assess, and manage liquidity risk effectively. Institutions need to balance the use of mathematical models and data-driven

analysis with the experience and judgment of their professionals to ensure that they are able to manage liquidity risk in an effective and sustainable manner."

### AI, ML FOR RISK MANAGEMENT

There are new technologies being deployed for improving LRM. Goel explains: "AI and ML are improving liquidity risk management by providing more accurate cash flow forecasting and real-time monitoring of liquidity positions. They are also automating various aspects of liquidity management, such as stress testing and contingency planning. Ragnall has a deep-rooted expertise in insurance and risk management, with a strong focus on innovation and digitalization."

### EXPERT TEAM'S CYBER SHIELD

Ragnall Insurance Broking's latest offering is Business Cyber Shield, a new-edge solution, designed to provide comprehensive cyber security solutions for businesses of all sizes. The Shield is Ragnall's commitment to provide the latest digital offerings that help its clients identify, mitigate, and manage the risks associated with the growing threat of cyber-attacks. The Shield is an end-to-end solution that helps businesses identify potential cyber threats, assess the risk, and implement comprehensive security measures. This comprehensive offering includes a range of services, including vulnerability assessment, continuous monitoring, and incident response.

Goel underlines: "The product is designed to be scalable, so it can be customized to meet the needs of SMEs to large corporations. Our highly experienced team of experts has been at the forefront of protecting businesses against the ever-evolving cyber threats. With this Shield, we are bringing our expertise and technology-driven approach to the next level, ensuring comprehensive protection for businesses of all sizes in India."

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# Women venture into non-traditional domains

Poonam Vijay Thakkar, senior marketing professional & mentor of change at NITI AAYOG, shares women related trends in the finance sector:

**Ravi Lalwani: What does data show about differences between men and women w.r.t. financial services, and how is that different from commonly held perceptions?**

**Poonam Vijay Thakkar:** As per the World Bank's Global Findex Database, as of 2017, approximately 77% of women in India aged 15 years or older had a bank account. This represents a significant improvement from 2014 when only 53% of women had a bank account. The Indian government's Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) scheme, launched in August 2014, has played a significant role in increasing the number of women with bank accounts in India.

As of January 2022, the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) estimated that 31.6 million women, or 34% of all mutual fund investors in India, were female. While more men than women invest in mutual funds, the gender gap persists. Since digitalization is at the heart of our country, the good news is coming from the fintech space. Fintech services are increasingly being used in several cities in India as the country continues to witness a surge in digital payments and financial technology solutions.

A report by Google and BCG in 2020 found that the number of women fintech users in India had tripled over the past year, and women accounted for almost half of the total number of new digital financial services users in the country. Another study by Visa in 2021 revealed that the number of women using fintech services in India had grown by 60% in the previous year, and women accounted for 35% of all fintech users in the country.

Various reports suggest that women are underrepresented in direct exposure to the stock market. Especially when it comes to the stock market and investments, men are more willing to take on high levels of investment risk because they know they will be working and making money for a longer time,



**Poonam Vijay Thakkar makes the shocking observation that many women don't save at all for retirement**

while women's careers are still seen as optional because of social norms.

People think of them as the first ones to take care of their families and children, even before their jobs. So, women are less likely to invest in the stock market and are less willing to take risks. They also don't have the same financial knowledge and confidence as men. Women are less likely than men to use banks and credit unions for their money needs. They also save less or don't save at all for retirement.

Overall, India has made significant progress in improving the state of women and reducing the gender gap in all areas, including financial services, but there is still a long way to go because, despite these improvements to uplift women, there are still significant gaps in financial inclusion between men and women in India. Despite the increasing adoption of fintech services among women, there are still several challenges to be addressed, including low digital literacy levels and limited access to digital infrastructure, currently coming in the way of the uptake

of digital financial services among women in India.

**Within the financial sector, which are the areas where women are making rapid career progress? What could be the explanation for success in these domains vis-à-vis other domains?**

Women are rapidly advancing in a variety of financial sectors, including compliance and risk management, wealth management, financial planning and fintech. Women are also taking the lead in the field of sustainable finance, which involves investing in businesses and projects that have a positive environmental and social impact. These fields may be less traditional, with fewer entrenched biases and gender stereotypes than other areas of finance.

There are several possible explanations for why women are making progress in these areas, including being more drawn to these areas because they align with their values and interests, and financial institutions actively seeking to increase diversity and inclusion. Women are also leveraging their skills and strengths, such as communication and collaboration, to achieve success in these areas. While various diversity and inclusion initiatives have opened doors for women, the doors to top management must still be opened on merit.

Today in the financial services space in India, according to a report by PRIME Database, as of September 2021, women CEOs represented approximately 5.5% of the total CEO positions in listed companies in India. This means that men represented the vast majority of CEO positions, with a percentage of approximately 94.5%. Are women not capable, or women don't get the opportunity – that is the question to ponder upon in the new India.

**Compared to men, women have a deeper interest in beauty, decoration,**

**fashion, etc. What trends do you see in financial services evolving around these interests?**

There has been an increasing trend in the financial services sector for businesses to cater to beauty, decoration, fashion, etc, interests by providing products and services that are in line with customers' values and preferences. For example, some banks and credit card companies offer cards with bonus points for spending on cosmetics, fashion, and beauty. There has also been a rise in fintech firms with a focus on customer-values-congruent industries like eco-friendly clothing and accessories, ethical investing, and others.

The use of social media and influencer marketing is also on the rise in the banking and insurance sectors. Instagram and YouTube are two of the most popular social media channels used by businesses to connect with consumers who have an interest in fashion, beauty, and lifestyle. Financial service providers have started reaching a highly engaged audience base through partnerships with influencers in these communities.

**As a Mentor of Change at NITI Aayog, with a focus on educational leadership, have you observed some things about what motivates and drives India's youngsters?**

## Applying Maslow's Law in financial services

Since 2016, I have worked in the financial services industry. Since then, I've learned one thing about consumer marketing that has stuck with me: customers don't buy your products because they want them; they buy them to meet their needs. You can either create that need in the market and position your products as first movers, or you can better understand the psychological needs of a buyer in the current market.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs has always been a key part of how any product or service has been made. This understanding has been especially helpful in the financial services industry. In the FS industry, we try to convince our customers to put their already-earned income to good use so that their already-earned money can now start earning money for them to reach their higher goals in life by beating inflation. In today's uncertain job market, your savings need to earn income for you to protect you from jolts. Now, the need for safety is more important than the need for comfort.

There are several factors driving growth, and I'm particularly fascinated by the passion and hunger that young people, particularly in rural India, have to offer. Digitalization and internet penetration have inspired young minds to explore the world beyond their villages and connect with us. We are not only educating but also bringing youngsters up to par with the top 30 cities in India, thanks to all the initiatives, various campaigns, ATL marathons, and high exposure to these young minds participating and learning experiences to them provided by the NITI Aayog Atal Tinkering Labs. The adventure has only just begun. These

young people's ideas are extremely original and powerful.

I've mostly seen girl children, particularly in rural India, pick up a slate and consider a career, a position, or a work profile. This makes me especially happy. Boys, on the other hand, want to do a lot of digital integration work, particularly intelligent engineering, to help uplift their villages. All they wanted was to 'bridge the gap', and that gap has been successfully bridged on a large scale thanks to our government's digital efforts. India is being built in small steps.

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## UBI - ManipalCigna Health Insurance launches 'Pink Health'

To mark International Women's Day, Union Bank of India launched a specialised 'Women Cancer Care Solution - Pink Health' powered by ManipalCigna Health Insurance on March 8. To help take away the financial burdens of its customers and for greater peace of mind before unexpected illness strikes, UBI has launched this exclusive value-based affordable insurance solution for women.

A. Manimekhalai, Managing Director and CEO, UBI, said, "We believe in the empowerment of women and are committed to secure the financial well-being of those who bank with us. All existing and prospective customers of the

bank are eligible to obtain this women's cancer care insurance solution for a nominal premium. Under the scheme a customer can be insured between ₹10 lakh to ₹30 lakh and the scheme provides lump sum payout upon diagnosis of breast cancer, cervical cancer and ovarian cancer."

Prasun Sikdar, Managing Director and CEO, ManipalCigna Health Insurance Co, said, "Our priority is to focus on providing affordable, predictable and simple health insurance products to every customer segment in India. We are confident that with the bank's widespread branch network, we will be able to reach



out to a larger customer base and further bolster health insurance penetration in the country."

# Crafting women leaders for tomorrow

Banking Frontiers has done a special story on women's leadership & initiatives taken by the BFSI organisations to improve the status of women in the workplace & society. The cover story is divided into 6 parts (i) finance literacy (ii) money management (iii) attractive career options (iv) leadership initiatives (v) older v/s younger women (vi) mental health:

## Part 1

### Bridging the cultural gap with literacy

Plugging the gaps in financial literacy among the women today:

Unlike their mothers or aunts, most women today are proficient in various aspects of financial planning including budgeting, saving, understanding financial services and products, debt management, and investment. This can be chiefly attributed to increasing levels of education as well as income-generating employment.

As per Sumitha Nandan, Executive Director, Manappuram Finance, key financial decisions at the household level still sadly remain male-dominated though women members are also earning. "However, it is a constant process of evolution and will be a sign of society's progress when more and more women, especially those at the bottom of the pyramid, attain financial independence and literacy. Most Indian households are not very encouraging towards the women in their homes to be aware and take charge of financial matters."

Priti Rathi Gupta, Founder of LXME, shares her perspective: "Today, women are earning and contributing to their families financially, and the traditional notion of the man being the bread earner and managing the family money is no more relevant. Women must and gradually are starting to participate in this money conversation."

Priti added that the incumbent financial services ecosystem is largely male dominated and hence focused on men. 'Men manage money much better' - this deep-rooted orientation has created a huge barrier in the minds of women



**Priti Rathi Gupta recommends the adaptation of money management as a life skill for modern-day women**

that money management and investing are complicated concepts that only a male brain can decipher.

#### **GAPS IN FINANCIAL LITERACY**

Kamayani Aniruddh Nagar, CEO – Wealth at Bajaj Capital avers that it is important to address the gaps in financial literacy among individuals, especially women. Financial independence is crucial for everyone, and it's essential to understand how to manage your finances, irrespective of your age or gender.

She asserts: "I want to emphasize that it is a common myth that someone

else should handle our finances for us. While it may seem convenient to rely on a spouse or parent, it's important to take ownership of our financial well-being."

#### **FINANCIAL PLANNING**

Priti believes that women are born money managers. When armed with the right attributes of being risk-aware, disciplined, making informed decisions, and staying calm under stress, women can go from managing home budgets to smart investors. She explains: "When women begin to invest and grow their money, they carry the potential to bring about a societal change, because they begin by investing back into their community and children. The future of financial freedom for women is the onset of an evolutionary change, and it begins with a simple adaptation of money management, as a life skill."

Procrastination is another issue that often hinders financial progress. It is easy to put off managing the finances for later, especially when someone has other pressing matters to attend to. However, delaying financial planning can have serious consequences in the long run, and it's crucial to prioritize it.

Kamayani shares: "We must overcome this barrier and empower ourselves to be financially independent. As women, we have the right to pursue our interests and secure our financial futures. It's time to break free from the notion of sacrificing everything for others and take control of our own lives."



## IMPROVING LITERACY

In recent times, big strides have been made in terms of financial inclusion, especially after the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana was launched in 2014. Sumitha shares more details: “According to data from the Ministry of Finance, nearly 20% of women in India still do not have access

to a bank account. In other words, one in every five women! This is a big gap that we need to close, going forward.”

Kamayani views that women must equip themselves with the necessary knowledge to make informed decisions and avoid being taken advantage of. Another common misconception is that

finance is complicated to understand.

She further added: “I want to assure everyone that managing personal finance is not rocket science. It’s about being efficient with our funds, and we can learn how to do that with a little bit of effort and education.”

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## Part 2

# Self & Experimental methods for money management

CEOs discuss the different learning methods adopted by their companies:

**M**anappuram Finance has no separate stream of education specifically for women. The NBFC has women’s self-help groups (SHGs) that work towards empowering women. The NBFC has a subsidiary - Asirvad - which is among the largest microfinance companies in the country. Asirvad lends money to groups of women in rural and semi-urban areas, especially in the under-banked corners of the country, to help them fulfil their dreams. Manappuram also helps its women employees to become part of the digital revolution that is sweeping the country.

SHGs help to promote financial literacy and financial independence among women. Such groups offer a safe and supportive environment for women to learn from each other and build networks that can help them achieve their financial goals.

Kamayani explains the impact: “I have seen first-hand how these groups can be effective in spreading financial literacy and helping women become more financially independent. By sharing experiences and insights, women can learn about the importance of financial planning, saving, and investing, and gain the confidence and skills they need to take control of their financial futures.”

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential learning is another great

way to promote financial literacy. By providing women with hands-on opportunities to learn about managing their finances, they can better understand how to make informed decisions and take proactive steps toward achieving their goals. Leaders agreed that even small amounts of savings can add up over time and have a significant impact on their financial well-being.

Kamayani says: “At Bajaj Capital, we are committed to promoting financial literacy among women. We are currently working on creating a team of women who have taken a career break or are unable to devote time to their work currently to form a financial literacy self-help group. Through this initiative, we hope to provide women with the tools and resources they need to achieve financial independence and build a network of empowered women who can inspire and support each other.”

## MONEY CONVERSATION

Encouraging women to have money conversations is one of the most important steps towards breaking the barrier between women and money management followed by rich relevant content on demystifying financial jargon. LXME has an easy-to-use and hassle-free investment platform with financial planning products like mutual funds and gold that are well-suited for women’s financial goals, risk appetite,



and investment tenure.

Priti says: “At the heart of LXME is a safe and trusted community of women who actively ask, learn, and share about money decisions that make them confident about gaining more control of their finances and learning from each other as they progress on their financial journeys.”

“The palatable and relatable educational content on money management is curated for women in the form of blog posts, videos, courses, learning modules, workshops, and bootcamps that demystify the world of finance,” she added.

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## Part 3

# Leveraging learning & feedback

BFSI companies are taking special learning and development initiatives for creating future women leaders:

**L**XME is a fast-growing robust community-led financial management, planning, and education platform for women. It is backed and run by a talented, skilled, and passionate team of women. The company has adopted entrepreneurial culture in the organization that drives people to brainstorm new ideas and come up with innovative solutions.

Priti says: “We are constantly learning and sharing knowledge that keeps us ahead of the curve and helps in the growth of the team. We aim to inspire a wave of financially fearless women to actively manage their money and achieve their dreams.”

### FAST-TRACK OPPORTUNITIES

Manappuram Finance provides emphasis on continuous learning, both in-house as well as at centers of excellence. The company has tie-ups with premier institutes and female employees are encouraged to enroll in courses in law, finance, and management.

Bajaj Capital has an inclusive environment for all team members, especially women. The company has a



**Kamayani Aniruddh Nagar** advocates flexible working hours, half-day work & fast-track growth opportunities for women employees

unique challenge that women face in the workplace, and the company is taking steps to address them.

Kamayani says: “We are offering

flexible working hours that can be tailored to individual needs. We also provide the option for team members to work from home if required, as well as the provision for half-day work each month. Additionally, we have established a mentoring network for women in middle management who are looking for fast-track growth opportunities.”

### FEEDBACK FOR A BETTER WORKFORCE

Bajaj Capital believes in creating an environment that supports all team members, regardless of their gender or background, so the company can build a stronger and more successful company. Kamayani provides the details: “We recognize that there is always more work to be done, and we remain humble in our approach to addressing these challenges.”

Bajaj Capital is constantly seeking feedback from its team members and looking for new ways to support and empower women in the workplace. By working together, company is building a brighter and more equitable future for its employees.

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## Part 4

# Compliance, operations & treasury attract women

CXOs discuss the areas in which women progressing the fastest:

**O**ver the decades, women have been making their mark in all fields and the financial sector is no exception. It has been seen women are excelling in areas like financial planning, savings, and investments including equity. Sumitha says: “A large part of the credit for this should go to women collectives such as SHGs and the growing economic status of women.”

### BETTER MONEY MANAGERS

As per Priti, it is statistically proven that women make for better money managers than men, thanks to some inherent qualities like discipline, goal focussed, and a balanced approach toward risk. With Virtual connection now more acceptable than ever before, women can use these skills even more actively. “I see women participating actively in money/wealth

managers, Fund managers, Technology and Product,” she added.

### FAVORITE ROLES

Kamayani observed that certain roles such as compliance, operations, and treasury management tends to attract more women due to their predictable hours and desk-oriented work environment. She reveals: “I understand that these observations may

be influenced by societal expectations and gender biases that can hold women back from exploring new opportunities or taking on more challenging roles.”

### OPENNESS & HUMILITY

All the women leaders agreed regarding creating a supportive and inclusive environment that empowers all employees, regardless of their gender or background, to pursue their goals and achieve success.

Kamayani says: “As a leader, I am committed to promoting diversity and inclusivity in my company and creating opportunities for all employees to grow and develop their skills. I believe that by addressing these challenges and creating a



culture of openness and humility, we can build a stronger and more successful company that

values and supports all its employees.”

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## Part 5

# Mental health issues higher for women

Women leaders discuss mental health issues at the workplace:

Leaders agreed that women face more mental health issues in the workplace than men and the primary reason for this is the misogynistic mindset still prevalent in society. Besides, finding a work-life balance is much harder for women compared for men. The burden of managing the house and raising children falls squarely on the woman’s shoulders, irrespective of whether she is a homemaker or a working woman. Sumitha believes: “Sustained efforts should continue in creating awareness about this inequality and POSH policy should be implemented at all workplaces in letter and spirit.”

### WORK PRESSURE

Women leaders believed that mental health issues affect everyone, and it is not limited to the workplace. And they think these issues are on the rise, and it is because people are becoming more aware of them and giving them the attention, they deserve.

Priti believes that millennials are most at risk of mental health issues. Life is far more exhausting and consuming for them. A lot of them live alone or without family in larger cities.



### Sumitha Nandan favors POSH policy to be implemented at all workplaces in letter and spirit

The pressure of work, not having a support system around, and finally the consumption of social media and its aspirations add to the problems. I believe both men and women are equally at risk, but women fare poorer as they find it hard to get an outlet.

Kamayani says: “At the end of the day, our happiness and peace of mind are essential to our overall well-being. I do not believe that there is a significant difference in the prevalence of mental health issues between genders.”

### YOUNGSTERS OPEN FOR MENTAL HEALTH DISCUSSIONS

Women may tend to be more self-critical and place greater pressure on themselves to conform to societal norms, which can contribute to anxiety. Kamayani believes that younger generations, regardless of gender, are more open and comfortable with discussing mental health and seeking solutions.

As a society, we have made great strides in reducing the stigma surrounding mental health issues, and we must continue to make progress in this area.

Kamayani adds: “I have found it easier to discuss the need for guidance with my children than with my parents. Overall, as a company, we strive to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all our employees, and we encourage our clients to prioritize their mental well-being as well.”

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## Part 6

# Today's woman is **bolder & more ambitious**

Experts shared the distinction between older & younger women:

**Y**oung women in India are more resilient and aware of their goals and aspirations. A major part of the earlier generations believed in putting their money in traditional instruments to have a sense of security against their capital. They never worried about not beating inflation. In the contemporary world, young women are realizing the importance that their money must not only fetch them returns to fulfil their financial goals but also supports their standard of living.

At LXME, Priti teaches never put all eggs in one basket. One must also attune a strategy to plan their investments to ensure that they're exploring all the options available and are picking the right set of instruments that cater to their needs.

"We are building their emergency fund and getting adequate insurance covers to protect themselves and their loved ones against any contingency," she adds.

Gone are the days when women were thought to be bashful and reserved. Today's women are without a doubt bolder than the previous generations. Sumitha shares: "Remember, a 2-wheeler maker revolutionized mobility of women across India with a punchline that asks: 'Why should boys have all the fun?' That in my view symbolizes the spirit of the times. Today's woman is ambitious, resilient, and ready to take risks."



Kamayani thinks that the young women of today are impressive and inspiring. They have access to more opportunities and choices than previous generations and are vocal about their opinions and aspirations. While it is true that they may have had certain advantages and protections that earlier generations did not, it is important to recognize that progress has been made in creating a more equal society.

She adds: "I acknowledge that this increased comfort and opportunity may present its own set of challenges.

Some young women may struggle with resilience and toughness in the face of adversity. This is not a trait unique to women, but rather a human trait that can affect anyone, regardless of gender. Therefore, as a society, we must continue to support and empower women to develop the skills they need to succeed in all areas of life. We should celebrate the progress that has been made while recognizing the work that still needs to be done."

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## Greenfield Data Centre of RBI to be established in Odisha

**R**BI Governor Shaktikanta Das laid the foundation stone for the establishment of a Greenfield Data Centre and Enterprise Computing and Cybersecurity Training Institute in Bhubaneswar on Wednesday. The New Data Centre and the Enterprise Computing and Cybersecurity Training Institute spread over an area of 18.55 acres, when commissioned, will cater to the emerging requirements of the

Reserve Bank and the financial sector.

The Governor in his remarks acknowledged the critical role played by technology in supporting the activities of the financial sector and the RBI over the years and recently, in facilitating a robust recovery from the pandemic. He highlighted the need for augmenting the existing computing infrastructure of the RBI supported by cutting edge facilities for research and capacity building



in emerging areas straddling central banking, technology and cybersecurity for a future ready RBI.

# 9 to 5 job unappealing among Gen Z

C S Radhika, General Manager at United India Insurance, reveals how covid has transformed the work culture:

**Ravi Lalwani: How is job satisfaction among employees at United India Insurance? Has it increased or decreased in recent times?**

**C S Radhika:** Covid has taught us much more than we can ever expect to learn in one lifetime. It taught us to value everything that we have at hand because nothing was in our control during those testing times. General insurers were declared as frontline workers and we were out there every single day in blood and skin. This I believe fostered a sense of responsibility in most of our workforce who willingly took up the task and we could see a great increase in job satisfaction.

It showed a multi-fold increase in customer satisfaction as well. Be it work from home concept or the innovative marketing strategies we had to adapt to retain retail customers or the digital challenges we encountered in the initial days, there was a lot of newness and first times involved, which kept people's enthusiasm level on a higher note. Also, respect for government servants in the eyes of the family grew manifold after seeing the amount of pressure we take daily.



**CS Radhika notes that respect for government servants in the eyes of the family grew manifold during covid**

**Is the trend the same for younger, middle age and older employees? is it the same for men and women?**

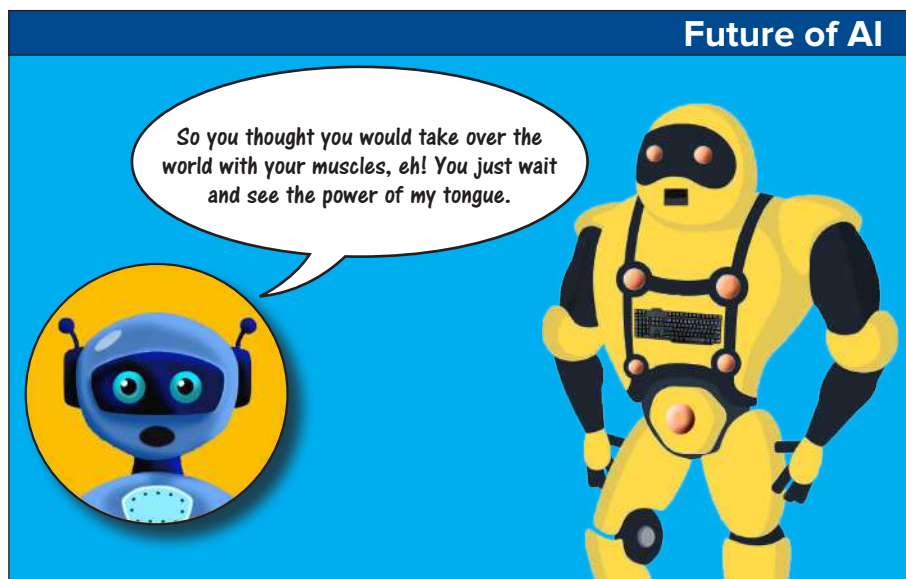
People are unique and hence their perspectives, but the overall trend seems to be similar across industries. Thanks

to lockdowns and hybrid WFHs, with all the extra time that was available to ponder about life, youngsters seem to want to explore their fullest potential in all possible facets and hence this 9-5 job seems a little unappealing to them. While older people who had enjoyed the comforts of being with family and grandkids feel it's time, they take a break from this routine and settle down into early retirement and pursue their passions. The middle-aged folks, our future pillars, who missed the social circle at the office the most, got a forcible break from routine which they have well utilized as can be seen from umpteen ideas that are pouring through. I feel the value of women at home has been well recognized by the entire household now (during and post covid) and that boost in ego is well reflected in greater productivity in the workplace as well.

**In which areas have employee expectations changed the most? Give examples of how your organization is increasing job satisfaction among employees.**

Mostly preference for working from home is the striking expectation that's a by-product of covid. Wanting a nearer-to-home posting, feeling the need to be given individual importance through regular one on ones like in private companies, wanting more job rotations and exciting challenges, need to be digitally trained/competent are all the various other changing trends that we observe. Being a PSU with service as the topmost priority, we have our limitations to strike a balance between meeting employee expectations and maintaining productivity. We are trying to make our work culture more employee-centric by trying to accommodate genuine and feasible requests. We are trying to go fully digital to ensure lesser travel and to enable remote handling of vital jobs from anywhere in India.

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# A CFO brings subjective intelligence to decision making

Girish Mantri, Chief Financial Officer at Howden Insurance Brokers India shares perspectives on investing in technology, outsourcing, analytics and decision making:

**Ravi Lalwani: Please list the top 3 challenges that CFOs are most likely to face in 2023. What will help them solve each of those challenges – new knowledge, innovation, more IQ, more EQ, or something else?**

**Girish Mantri:** As the pace of adoption of digital technologies accelerates in a post-pandemic world, CFOs will have to be more agile in embracing advanced tools such as data analytics, AI, automation, and cloud solutions to facilitate their organization's digital transformation. In this context, establishing a culture of simplification, driving standardization by intelligently automating manual processes, and pursuing technology integration initiatives within the outlined budget will be a key challenge.

To achieve sustainable and profitable growth, CFOs will have to transform existing business processes and systems to optimize performance, while addressing ESG concerns and embedding an exclusive strategy within the revitalized business model. We have got new compliances and new laws that keep coming in and we need to ensure 100% compliance with all of those which means that we have just got to be that much more agile with ourselves and with our teams which means we also need to be dynamically developing our teams. Ultimately, the challenge will be to lay the foundations of a future-ready organization by delicately balancing often conflicting aspects in technology decision-making.

**In the last couple of years, what has been the major change in your engagement with different CXOs in the company?**

The current VUCA environment has not only mandated a deeper collaboration between various teams in



**Girish Mantri asserts that VUCA environment helps in deeper collaboration between various teams**

an organization, but also between CXOs heading and guiding them through different challenges that spring up during doing business. As a result, it has become important to engage deeply with business teams while designing and implementing business plans, encouraging those involved in managing the company's finances to work as business partners rather than act as controllers. I drive my team to embody these principles and support the different functions in unlocking value for the organization. In that sense, it would only be apt to position oneself as a custodian of enterprise value, responsible for co-steering profitable business growth through prudent capital allocation.

**How should companies update their outsourcing and insourcing approaches considering the dynamic and unpredictable ecosystem today?**

While there are many economic benefits of outsourcing tasks in any business, it is crucial to first recognize the company's core competencies. This involves a thorough internal analysis of each business activity and its contribution to achieving the organization's mission statement. Focusing on these core competencies or strengths that set an organization apart from its competitors is critical for the long-term survival and success of any business operation. Therefore, these business activities should ideally be insourced, and measures should be taken to foster continuous improvement to further develop the organization's core competencies.

On the other hand, non-core activities should be explored for outsourcing, especially if external suppliers have a cost advantage in terms of supplying the relevant goods or services. Because such activities constitute a sizeable portion of most organizations' overall business, it makes sense to prioritize them when creating an outsourcing strategy. Considering the current external business climate, it is important to re-evaluate these aspects periodically and optimize which activities can be outsourced to reduce overall costs of operation.

**With rising costs of technology and the varying technology options, what strategic inputs should the CFO community be presenting to the board?**

In the current inflationary landscape, CFOs should be increasingly investing in technology to identify opportunities and reduce the cost of doing business. Towards this end, CFOs are expected to have an overall understanding of the latest technology tools, and their digital uses cases and have a cost-benefit analysis for each of them. By leveraging these insights, CFOs can develop a sustainable



digital transformation roadmap that balances cost concerns with the potential to capitalize on attractive growth opportunities presented by a digital revolution.

This information can help the company's board of directors to set the future digital strategy and allocate capital or other resources that may be needed to implement the same. Additionally, with such detailed analysis and planning carried out, the board can act faster in response to the changing technology landscape and prioritize different digital investments accordingly.

**With humongous amounts of data available, what kinds of decisions in your domain remain subjective?**

Every financial decision-making process, whether it be regarding new projects or existing ones that need further investments, ought to be made after ascertaining if the capital infusion would add value to the organization and its shareholders. With the increasing use of advanced data analytics tools that can seemingly crunch numbers



from a huge data pool, it may seem that such decision-making can be automated completely. However, many assumptions are made when assessing the value that is expected to be generated with every capital investment, thereby introducing a layer of subjectivity that is hard to ignore. This is especially true for the net present value (NPV) rule that is widespread in its use across most organisations in assessing the value that new capital investments are expected to create.

The projection of future cash flows, arriving at the discounting rate for future cashflows, and deducing the NPV of any financial investment can therefore vary depending on the subjectivity introduced by the respective financial manager. This gives me enough reason to believe that, despite the proliferation of technological tools in the financial world, it would be difficult to eliminate the human element in financial modelling.

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## ESAF Small Finance Bank Celebrates 6th Anniversary

**E**SAF Small Finance Bank celebrated its 6th Anniversary and ESAF commemorated its 31st Foundation Day on March 15, 2023.

Shaji K. V., Chairman of NABARD, inaugurated the event. "Similar to NABARD, ESAF has contributed much to enhance the creditworthiness of the people in backward areas. The achievements of ESAF have been truly remarkable," he said. K. Paul Thomas, Founder, MD & CEO, ESAF Small Finance Bank, delivered the Foundation Day message.

Shaji K.V. was also honoured at the ceremony for being the first Keralite to rise to the level of Chairman of NABARD. Adv. K. Rajan, Revenue Minister, Kerala, P. Balachandran, MLA, Thrissur, Mereena Paul, Executive Director, ESAF Foundation, and R. Billy, Vice President, ESAF Foundation, also spoke on the occasion.

Awards for the Best Co-operative Societies



were also distributed during the event. Valakavu Ksheera Vyavasaya Co-operative Society and Kulumai Milk Producer Company won the Best Co-operative Societies Award. Jai Sardar Krishi Vikas Farmer Producer Company of Maharashtra also received a special jury mention at the event. The function also saw handing over of houses built by ESAF Co-operative and felicitation of employees who completed 10 years of service.

ESAF Bank's sixth anniversary was also celebrated eventfully. Vijay Kumar

Nayak, Chief General Manager, Reserve Bank of India, inaugurated the event. P. R. Ravimohan, Chairman, ESAF Small Finance Bank, K. Paul Thomas, MD & CEO, ESAF Small Finance Bank, Dr. Gopakumaran Nair, Chief General Manager, NABARD, Ajayan M. G., Director, ESAF Small Finance Bank, and George Thomas, George K. John, Hari Velloor and Hemant Tamta, Executive Vice Presidents, ESAF Small Finance Bank, also spoke on the occasion.



# MAPPING THE MARKETING TRENDS

10 CMOs from 10 leading BFSI companies participated in the Banking Frontiers April cover story on marketing trends in the recent past. The cover story is divided into 10 parts, with each part revealing a specific aspect:



## Part 1

# The data bubble keeps inflating

CMOs discussed about the shift in the sources of data in the financial sector:

**T**he importance of data from various sources will continue to grow in the financial sector. With the increasing digitization of financial services and the proliferation of mobile devices, social media, and other digital channels, financial companies have access to more data than ever before. Nowadays data is becoming more abundant and accessible as financial sector generates a huge amount of data from customers' financial transactions.

Sreekanth C K, Head of Marketing at ESAF Bank, says: "Data gathering, and optimization will continue to create opportunities by understanding the customers better and their journey, which will allow financial institutions to grow their business with data-driven decisions, augmenting customer segmentation, pin down frauds, reduce operational risks and improve operational efficiencies."

M V S Murthy, Chief Marketing Officer at Federal Bank, believes that marketers are being subjected to data deluge. Its magnitude can be overwhelming to the extent of causing delusion - as in, the possible fallout is that it becomes a blind spot. However, the real-time power that these streams give is invaluable. They help anticipate, be proactive and be relevant while reaching out to prospects or existing customers.

He adds: "The other priming is the power of personalization that allows for near in-person interaction. However, if the data points are not complete or missing then the client interpretation suffers, and it rubs off wrongly on the brand. There will



**Sreekanth C K** supports training in latest skills for data-driven ecosystem

be an increasing demand for data, but smart marketers will filter out what's not needed rather than make their marketing initiatives claustrophobic and stunned into inaction."

### **HOLISTIC APPROACH FOR DATA COLLECTION**

As per Aabhinna Suresh Khare, CDMO at Bajaj Capital, there will be a shift towards a more holistic approach for data collection and analysis. This means that there is a need to look beyond traditional transactional data and start leveraging data from a variety of sources, such as browsing

behavior, search queries, social media posts, and media consumption patterns. By incorporating this broader set of data sources, financial companies will be able to gain a more comprehensive understanding of their customers and their financial needs.

Suresh shared an example: "We can use browsing data to identify potential customers who are actively looking for financial products or analyse social media posts to understand the sentiment around our brand. At the same time, it is important to recognize the challenges associated with collecting and analysing this data, particularly concerning privacy and data security. As such, we need to ensure that we are using this data responsibly and transparently and that we are complying with all relevant regulations and standards."

### **THIRD-PARTY DATA & INCLUSIVE ECOSYSTEM**

Sandeep Walunj, CMO, Nippon Life India AMC believes that transactional and other first-party data will be more important due to various reasons: "I see organizations cooperating for second/third-party data. I also see third-party consent aggregation platforms coming up; SEBI already has made provisions for account aggregators."

Aabhinna predicts that the future of data in the financial sector will be characterized by a shift towards a more diverse and inclusive data ecosystem, where data from a variety of sources is leveraged to drive better customer experiences and business outcomes.

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## Part 2

# Data: A qualitative shift

Marketing heads reveals the importance of data in the BFSI sector to improve efficiency & profitability:



**D**ata enables financial service providers to offer personalized service, improve efficiency, and increase profitability. The shift in data sources affects the operational costs, staffing strategies, customer experience and more. The world is seeing a massive surge in data generation. As the technological revolution gains momentum, so is digital data generation and storage.

Emerging technologies like IOT generate vast volumes of data which are opening new opportunities in the commercial and business worlds. Many public and private organizations have started to control the immense capacities of these data. The business system data provides credit cards, loyalty cards, web browsing, and mobile app history. The administrative system data have a census, population, foreign trade, income, social, health, etc.

### TECHNOLOGY & DATA

The ubiquitous system includes mobile devices, sensors, actuators, etc. Data is collected from individuals through mobile usage, mobile sensors, and the internet. Seema Jadhav, Head of Marketing & Corporate Communications at Trust Mutual Fund, says: “These data sources can help improve educational, healthcare, airline, and investment decisions. Large-scale decision-making necessitates consensus measurement, consensus-building mechanisms, subgroup clustering and behavior management, to which AI will positively contribute.”

She further adds: “Decision-making lies at the future intersections of AI, ML, DL, and emerging data sources. With the ongoing advancement of technology and the evolution of consumer behavior, it is expected that the financial sector will progressively recognize the significance of a more diverse set of data sources beyond conventional transactional data.”

### PRIORITIZATION OF DATA

The growing adoption of digital channels for financial transactions such as online banking to mobile payments and online



**Seema Jadhav promotes AI, ML, DL for faster & accurate decision-making for the marketers**

retail capital markets penetration offer a vast amount of data that can be scrutinized to gain an enhanced understanding of consumer behavior and preferences.

Pankaj Kapoor, Chief Marketing Officer at Reliance Securities, adds: “Social media platforms and other digital channels have become significant sources of information and influence for consumers. Users now rely on these platforms to seek advice and recommendations on financial products and services. By analysing social and other forms of online activity, financial institutions can attain valuable insights into customer sentiments and preferences.”

### DIGITAL DISRUPTION

Digital disruption is one of the most important trends to act upon in 2023. The importance of data from various sources will only grow as the financial sector becomes more digitized. Shriram Finance has a greater emphasis in the future on customer data, specifically data generated from transactions, browsing behavior, search queries, social media posts, media consumption, and cookies. Diana Monteiro, Deputy VP of Marketing

& Communications at Shriram Finance & Shriram Housing Finance, provides details: “Handling data responsibly and securely has become more critical. To maintain customer trust and confidence, financial institutions must adhere to stringent data protection regulations. We anticipate a greater emphasis in the financial sector on data-driven marketing practices. Customer data will become a key resource to deliver personalized experiences and devise targeted marketing campaigns.”

### MEDIA CONSUMPTION & COOKIES

Social media data can provide insights into customers’ sentiments, preferences, and behaviors, which can be used to inform marketing and product development strategies. Media consumption data (which news articles or videos customers are consuming) can provide valuable insights into customers’ interests and concerns, which can be used to tailor financial products and services.

Anand Bhatia, CMO of Fino Payments Bank, says: “Different data points (transactions, browsing, media posts, etc) impact different aspects of a consumer’s interaction with us – from cross sell (transactions have a heavy influence) to acquisition (external data points like media consumption have a big impact). Hence I see it as a ‘horses for courses’ approach. The best part is that we have the means to work with diverse data streams and stitch a desired view of the customer.”

Aiswarya Chandrashekar, Chief Marketing Officer at FIA Global, commented: “As regulations around data privacy continue to evolve, the use of cookies may become less important. Financial institutions may need to find alternative ways to collect and analyze customer data, such as through opt-in programs or partnerships with third-party data providers. Overall, the importance attached to different sources of data in the financial sector is likely to shift over time based on the changing needs of customers and the regulatory landscape.”

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## Part 3

# Analytics, Automation & Attribution

Marketing heads shared the importance of analytics, personalization, automation & attribution in marketing campaigns:

**T**he accuracy and effectiveness of marketing efforts in the financial sector have improved with better availability of data. Data analytics has allowed financial institutions to gain a deeper understanding of their customer's habits, preferences and needs. They are now able to deliver more personalized, relevant marketing messages and specifically target customers with measurable outcomes. Web analytics, social media marketing analytics, lead generation and attribution, SEO analytics, email marketing analytics, etc, are the leading analytics use cases.

There is an emerging trend of predictive analytics that helps to anticipate customer needs and behavior. Diana provides more details : "Financial institutions can predict which customers are most likely to be interested in a particular product or service by analysing large amounts of data. The activity can highlight key insights about the potential target groups and enable personalized marketing messages. It can result in increased engagement, and in turn, higher conversion rates."

Pankaj added: "As a result of greater data accessibility, brands are now leveraging advanced analytics to gain insights into customer behavior and anticipate future outcomes. This enables them to refine their marketing strategies and pinpoint the customer segments that are most likely to exhibit interest in their offerings."

With the growing sophistication of data analytics and artificial intelligence, BFSI companies can expect to see greater improvements in marketing accuracy and effectiveness. But all this has some drawbacks. UV Vamsi Krishna, Head of Marketing at StoxBox, explains: "It is important to note that the use of data for marketing purposes also raises privacy concerns and regulatory challenges, which will need to be addressed by financial institutions to maintain consumer trust and comply with relevant regulations."



**Diana Monteiro recommends Shriram Management Education Scheme to upskill the marketing skills of the employees**

### PERSONALIZATION & CUSTOMIZATION

With more data available about individual customers, brands can personalize their marketing messages to a greater extent. This includes tailoring messaging, offers, and recommendations to specific customer preferences and behaviors to increase relevance and engagement, leading to improved conversion rates and customer loyalty.

As per M V S Murthy, one of the biggest gains has been to the recipient. Brands can avoid the bombardment of messages. Still, anxiety can get better with prudence we tend to communicate on repeat. The opportunity is to customize the message to the medium while keeping the overall pitch constant. This helps track each strand across the format, message, and medium.

M V S Murthy further adds: "We have the capability of tracking impact on the physical distribution channels as well as the

digital marketplaces, whenever a campaign goes live. The delta is significant compared to a few decades back."

Sandeep says: "While I see targeting becoming more important, I am not sure whether communication customization will hit the bull's eye for a good amount of time since mass customization is not going to be easy enough to crack quickly. Difficult to replace human creativity when it comes to relevance and relatability."

### DATA-DRIVEN MARKETING

The covid pandemic made a fundamental change in consumer behavior. So, in data-driven marketing, the availability of updated data is critical as customer behaviors evolve daily. Sreekanth C K shares more details : "Marketers adopt a comprehensive approach to data collection, gathering not just behavioral trends and location-based insights, but also third-party analytics on their business, customers, and competitors, to complement their in-house customer data."

Data has enabled marketers to make more informed decisions about campaign strategies and tactics. Aabhinna says: "By analyzing customer data, marketers can identify the channels, messaging, and creative that resonates most with their target audiences. This allows them to optimize campaigns in real-time and improve ROI."

There is also a major downside to the marketing data regarding its genuineness. With rampant increases in marketing budgets aided by digital penetration during covid, much fake or irrelevant data got accumulated in every marketer's database. UV Vamsi shares the initiatives to remove the fake data: "At StoxBox, we have implemented AI tools that work alongside the campaign management suite, mainly to remove outliers and fake data received especially from social media."

### AUTOMATION & ATTRIBUTION

With the help of data, marketing

automation has become more sophisticated. Marketers can use data to trigger personalized messages, recommend products, and optimize campaigns in real time. This not only improves efficiency but also ensures that customers receive more relevant and timely communications.

Aabhinna divers deeper: “Data has

enabled marketers to better understand the customer journey and attribute value to specific touchpoints. By analyzing data across channels and devices, marketers can more accurately measure the impact of their campaigns and optimize their marketing mix accordingly.”

Overall, the increasing availability and richness of data has enabled

marketers to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of their marketing campaigns. By leveraging data-driven insights, marketers can create even more personalized and targeted campaigns, optimize their strategies in real time, and measure the impact of their efforts much more accurately.

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## Part 4

# ROI measurement on the go

Marketers discussed the simplification of ROI & rise of permission marketing:

**T**he increasing availability of data enables companies to perform more comprehensive measurements of their marketing campaigns. This entails tracking customer engagement, conversions, and return on investment (ROI) to gain insights and make data-driven decisions to refine their marketing strategies over time. Anand commented: “The cost of acquisition declines and overall ROAS (return on advertising spends) improves. We are reaping the benefits of better availability of data. Apographic targeting basis handset type, cost, location, media habits, and surfing behaviour gives a huge upside.”

### MULTI-CHANNEL INTEGRATION

Amidst the proliferation of customer touchpoints, brands are leveraging data to interweave their marketing campaigns across various channels. Pankaj shares: “This approach ensures that clients receive unified messaging and offerings across platforms, thereby augmenting their engagement and catalyzing purchase decisions.”

### PERMISSION MARKETING

The focus of marketing has shifted from competitive advertising to the collection and distribution of data. Because of how



**Anand Bhatia** approves the ‘horses for courses’ approach for a better impact on the marketing campaigns

powerful database technology has gotten, it is easier to market to an individual than a target group. Information is collected through things like surveys and polls.

Seema Jadhav feels that the most exciting development in this field is permission marketing. Permission marketing allows businesses to collect

information about consumers for direct marketing. Many tools are available to personalize direct mail and track and target marketing information. More accurate information, collected and organized in databases, is the key to good customer relations. Digital technologies in marketing allow consumers to find and research products from the comfort of their homes. Direct marketing is now encouraging consumers to do just that.

### TRANSACTIONS & BROWSING

Transactions will likely remain a critical source of data for the financial sector. However, there may be a greater emphasis on real-time transaction data, as well as an increased focus on analyzing the underlying behavior and patterns behind transactions, such as what types of products are customers purchasing, when are they making these purchases, etc.

Aiswarya said: “With the growth of online banking and financial services, browsing and search data will likely become more important. Financial institutions may use this data to better understand their customers’ financial needs and preferences, as well as to personalize their marketing and outreach efforts.”

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## Part 5

# Fintechs vis-à-vis Incumbents

Marketing experts highlighted the key differences between fintechs & incumbents as regarding marketing:

**T**he diverse business models and target markets of fintechs and incumbents result in contrasting marketing strategies. Fintechs adopt an agile and adaptable approach, harnessing digital platforms to connect and interact with customers efficiently. They concentrate on a specific customer group or niche, customizing their offerings and communication to resonate with that audience. In contrast, incumbents have a wider customer base and a well-established brand image. They may utilize a variety of channels, including conventional methods like print or TV advertising, while also embracing digital channels to extend their reach to a broad and targeted audience.

Sreekanth C K shares: “Fintechs tend to prioritize user experience and convenience in their marketing efforts, highlighting their digital platforms and mobile apps as key selling points. They may be ready to compromise on costing and offer incentives such as lower fees or higher interest rates to attract customers.”

### DIVERSE BUSINESS MODELS

The marketing strategies of fintechs and incumbents can differ significantly due to differences in their business models, target customers, and resources. Fintechs tend to be more agile and innovative, leveraging technology to disrupt traditional financial services and reach new customer segments. In contrast, incumbents have established customer bases and brand recognition, and with agility can keep up with adapting to changing market trends and technological advancements.

Fintechs typically focus on digital marketing channels, such as social media, search engine optimization, and targeted online advertising to reach and engage with their customers. They also tend to prioritize customer experience, offering personalized and user-friendly interfaces that simplify financial transactions and decision-making.



### UV Vamsi Krishna leverages AI tools for campaign management & to remove fake data

As per Aiswarya, FIA has an immense advantage, since it moved to big data and tech adaptations very early on. “We were not afraid to include new customer segments, create increased brand awareness, and improve customer experience. As a result, our business’s marketing strategy shifted in many ways in the past few years. We began targeting new customer segments and found ways to appeal to different segments. This required us to adjust messaging, advertising channels, and even product offerings. We began leveraging the fintech brand, and having a strong brand reputation helped our business by adding trust and credibility.”

Diana bats for incumbents. She says: “Incumbents typically have larger marketing budgets and a wider range of marketing channels to work with. They may tilt more towards traditional marketing methods such as television, radio, print advertising, and on-ground promotions for branch and ATM networks. Having said

that, much new age and digital-first players are emerging and experimenting with large investments in digital channels and implementing agile marketing practices.”

According to UV Vamsi Krishna, fintechs typically target a specific niche in the market, such as millennials, small business owners, or underbanked populations, and use digital channels to acquire and retain customers. They tend to have a more agile marketing approach, relying on data and customer feedback to quickly test and iterate campaigns.

He says: “Fintechs often offer new and innovative products that are designed to be simple, convenient, and user-friendly, and their marketing messages tend to emphasize the benefits of these products, such as speed, low fees, and personalization.”

### PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Marketers believe that collaborating with a fintech can be advantageous for incumbents when it comes to marketing strategy. By joining forces, incumbents can tap into new demographics and markets, and gain access to advanced technologies and channels for customer engagement. Partnering with fintechs can provide an opportunity to access new customer segments and benefit from the innovation and agility of these startups. This may require a shift in marketing strategy, to focus on digital channels and to emphasize the benefits of the fintech’s products and services.

Sreekanth C K offers more details: “Collaborations may lead to a greater focus on digital and mobile marketing initiatives, as incumbents leverage their fintech partnerships to elevate the overall customer experience and expand their reach. Additionally, fintech partnerships can provide opportunities for co-branding and cross-promotion, which can further enhance marketing effectiveness.”

UV Vamsi feels that incumbent may also need to adapt its marketing messages

to align with the fintech's brand and target audience and to collaborate closely with the fintech to ensure a consistent and effective marketing approach. Overall, the marketing strategy for an incumbent will need to be tailored to the specific fintech partnership, considering the goals and needs of both parties and the characteristics of the target audience.

He adds: "We have partnered with both large service providers and fintechs to help us scale quickly. Several partners are helping us in product development, content writing, CRM, marketing automation, digital KYC, and the like."

### **PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES**

CMOs also agreed that partnering with fintechs can bring about significant growth potential and new business opportunities. In terms of marketing strategy, this partnership can lead to a shift towards a

more customer-centric approach, with a focus on enhancing the customer experience and providing user-friendly products. Additionally, incumbents can leverage the technological capabilities of their Fintech partners to offer more innovative and efficient financial services.

Pankaj shares the challenges: "There are challenges which include culture differences, IT system adaptability, regulatory uncertainty and trust. To overcome these challenges, both parties should believe in the power and benefits derived from collaboration and actively work towards establishing a collaborative relationship."

Marketers agreed that incumbents should exhibit their commitment to collaboration by allowing top executives to interact at the initial stages of collaboration and securing innovative resources promptly to reduce delays. Additionally, incumbents should establish corporate-backed venture capital funds, and

innovative labs, and investigate opportunities at the early stages of fintech transformation.

CMOs emphasised that incumbents should promote fintech partnerships and set aside resources and effort towards establishing an open-source platform to provide agility to the system. This will allow greater ease of IT design and collaboration when dealing with designing and integrating external technologies. Pankaj advocates: "A balance between fin and tech should be sought, which will bring about real change in the financial industry. this partnership can lead to a more engaged customer experience, new business opportunities, and enhanced revenue streams for all parties involved. as an incumbent, shifting towards a more customer-centric approach and leveraging the technological capabilities of fintech partners can bring about significant benefits to the marketing strategy."

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## **Part 6**

# **Cooperative marketing is the new buzz**

Marketing heads shared the details about the new marketing metrics:

**F**intechs are digital-first, they also can invest upfront and wait for traction to develop. Incumbents typically spend a portion of their earnings, Fintechs can burn cash upfront to create future earnings.

The basic concepts of marketing are the same across all mediums for everyone. Depending on the stage of life of the brand and its objectives, the marketing levers get pressed. Fintech marketing is built on the same fundamentals as other industry-specific marketing; it's not about how you market a fintech but how and where your customer wants to be sold. What is true for traditional financial institutions is true for fintech; trust, credibility, and reliability come first.

Sandeep says: "Cooperative marketing is one obvious answer. Here, you align marketing objectives with a Fintech and harness them together. Borrowing best practices are something I have done with pride. Fintech's excessive focus on online



**Sandeep Walunj** prefers cooperative marketing for better alignment of marketing strategy

recruiting and fulfilment has motivated us to strengthen our physical/ phygital play and gain for churn left behind by fintechs."

Fino Payment Bank work with partners and they have full alignment on the objectives. The bank focus on communication, TG, sensitivities, etc.

Seema shares: "Traditional financial institutions will have no choice but to follow suit because the market will demand it as a marketing strategy; they use gamification, affiliate or influencer marketing, experiential marketing, partnership marketing, community marketing, branding, and content marketing."

### **SEGMENT, SCALE & SUSTAINABILITY**

Federal Bank is working on a 3S model that has a triad of Segment, Scale, and Sustainability. M V S Murthy shares details: "Taking the last first, we don't want to do anything that we don't think we will have the passion to pursue over the long term. It

pertains not only to the marketing team but to all the business verticals which are glued by marketing.”

He adds: “We want to be nimble to scale up once the proof of concept or tests are done. Most important is that the strategy must be sharp enough to be relevant to different customer segments. The 3 S is the starting point and NPS – Nimble, Passionate, and Sharp - is how we go about it.”

### **INNOVATION & EXPERIMENTATION**

Fintechs are known for their ability to create highly personalized and targeted marketing campaigns, leveraging

data and technology to engage with customers in real time. Aabhinna says: “By partnering with fintechs, we can gain access to new tools and technologies that can help us improve our targeting and segmentation capabilities.”

Fintechs are also known for their innovative and experimental approach to marketing, often testing and iterating on new strategies and tactics. Aabhinna adds: “By partnering with fintechs, we can tap into this culture of innovation and experimentation, learning from their successes and failures and applying those insights to our marketing efforts.”

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## Part 7

# Martech & Content to rule in 2023

Marketing experts debated the skills required by a modern-day marketer:

**T**he marketing landscape is continuously evolving, and as a result, businesses need to stay ahead of the game to ensure that they remain competitive. CMOs believe that certain marketing skills will become increasingly important in the coming year, and they are preparing their organization to meet demands.

Marketers recognize that systematic digital engagement will continue to be a critical component of any successful marketing strategy in 2023. Pankaj speaks: “Companies are investing in digital transformation programs and tools to enable our teams to better leverage digital channels to connect with potential customers. Understanding the customer journeys and identifying crucial touchpoints will be crucial. To meet this demand, we are leveraging data analytics and creating cohorts to enhance our efforts in this area. Additionally, we are developing a deeper understanding of user experience design to improve our customers’ interactions with our brand.”

As per Pankaj, digital media platforms continue to grow in popularity, we



### **M V S Murthy endorses an omnibus marketing approach to reach customers in micro-markets**

expect investments in paid advertising to become increasingly important in 2023. We are investing in training and tools to enable our team to create highly targeted

campaigns that resonate with our target audience maximize conversion rates and acquire profitable customers. Effective communication through content is critical for any marketing campaign. We are placing a strong emphasis on developing content that is compelling, clear, and concise, and can resonate with our target audience. To do so, we are investing in training and tools to improve our content creation abilities.

### **AI, ML & ANALYTICS**

No matter what new technologies emerge, customers will remain the driving force behind marketing strategies. Therefore, the focus of new skills will be on improving the customer experience. Enhancing the customer experience will remain a top priority for companies, and marketers who can create personalized experiences that seamlessly integrate with customers’ lives will be highly sought after. To achieve this, companies should invest in customer journey mapping and offer training to their marketers on customer experience design that is guided by



behavioural economics principles.

Personalization will be a crucial aspect to ensure that customers receive content that is relevant to them, which will increase the likelihood of a positive response. Moreover, customers will have the opportunity to receive updated information based on predictive insights derived from their recent browsing history. This approach will not only enhance the customer experience but also enable companies to generate an attractive return on investment.

Digital marketing is expected to continue its upward trend with a greater emphasis on Search Engine Optimization (SEO), Social Media campaigns, and email campaigns. As consumers become more digitally savvy, businesses must adapt their marketing strategies to meet changing consumer behaviours. Utilizing effective SEO techniques, engaging in social media campaigns, and developing targeted email campaigns will be key to maintaining a competitive edge in the digital marketplace.

ESAF Small Finance Bank to invest in emerging technologies and platforms that allow the bank to optimize data, artificial intelligence, and personalization in its campaigns. Sreekanth C K speaks: “We will receive training to acquire the latest skills and expertise needed to navigate the increasingly digital and data-driven ecosystem.”

AI and machine learning is becoming increasingly important in marketing in 2023. Fintechs are using AI and machine learning to analysed data, automate marketing processes, and deliver personalized experiences to customers. To prepare for this, businesses should invest in the necessary tools and technologies to integrate AI and machine learning into their marketing strategies. FIA has been agile in adapting to these early in its journey.

Aiswarya says: “Digital marketing has been on the rise for several years, but it is likely to become even more important in 2023. With the pandemic accelerating the shift to digital channels, businesses need to focus on building a strong online presence. This includes investing in

SEO, content marketing, social media marketing, and other digital marketing channels. FIA has been an early adapter here too by investing in tools and training efficiently.”

### **CX, AGILE MARKETING & AUTOMATION**

Customer experience is becoming increasingly important in the financial sector. Marketers who can create and deliver exceptional customer experiences across all touchpoints will be highly valued. With the need to quickly adapt to changing market conditions, financial institutions will require marketers who can work in an agile manner, and quickly test and titrate their marketing campaigns.

Marketing automation is becoming an essential tool for financial institutions looking to improve their marketing efficiency and effectiveness. Marketers who can manage and optimize marketing automation systems will be in high demand.

Aabhinna says: “In a highly competitive market, customer experience will be a key differentiator. Marketers will need to have a deep understanding of customer needs and preferences and be able to design and deliver personalized and engaging experiences across channels.”

In 2023, delivering exceptional customer experiences will be a key differentiator for brands. UV Vamsi explains: “Marketing professionals will need to have skills in customer journey mapping, customer feedback analysis,

and customer relationship management to create memorable experiences.”

### **ANALYTICS & MARTECH TOOLS**

Data analytics is becoming increasingly important in marketing as businesses collect more data on their customers and marketing campaigns. To prepare for this, fintechs should invest in tools and technologies, and expertise to analysed and interpret data effectively. Diana says: “Marketing analytics has been a sub-skill for a long, I think it will take precedence this year as more consumers move online, digital marketing skills such as social media marketing, email marketing, and SEO will be critical for success. With the growing importance of data-driven marketing, financial institutions will need marketers who are skilled in data analysis and can use data to make strategic decisions.”

She further added: “We anticipate that the importance of digital marketing skills will continue to rise in 2023, with an increasing emphasis on data analytics and customer experience. Financial institutions must ensure that their marketing teams have the necessary skills to succeed in this rapidly changing environment.”

According to Anand, A marketing manager or CMO, without extremely strong analytical skills is handicapped with a poor understanding of social media as a platform is at a disadvantage with limited frontline sales exposure and will struggle with a lack of interest in martech tools has an uphill task We are trying to give



our team members as much exposure as possible on all these points. It is a journey. Some of it can be trained for and some are behavioural change.

As the pace of change accelerates, marketers will need to be able to quickly adapt to new market conditions and customer behaviours. Agile marketing methodologies will become more important, enabling marketers to test and iterate on new strategies and tactics in real time.

As per Aabhinna, to prepare our organization for these trends, we are investing in training and development programs that focus on these skills. We are also hiring new talent with expertise in these areas and partnering with external agencies and consultants to bring in additional expertise. Additionally, we are investing in new technologies and tools that enable us to better analyse and interpret data, personalize customer experiences, and optimize our marketing campaigns in real time. By focusing on these skills and capabilities, we believe we can stay ahead of the curve and continue to deliver value to our customers.

### **SUPER APP**

Shriram Finance is developing a super app that will cater to the lending and saving needs of our close to 7 million customers. The NBFC is partnering with over 100 new partners to provide add-on services like medical care, and the purchase of assets like cars, bikes, gold, etc, which will make us a one-stop shop for rural and semi-urban customers. Diana provides more details: “We are continuously bringing down the cost of the acquisition through digital leads by better understanding our customers and eliminating poorly performing channels. We have a well-planned SEO strategy, which drives organic website visits. We believe that a targeted rifle shot is better than a scattered shotgun blast.”

### **OMNIBUS MARKETING**

Marketers need to get deeper into business. The brand is business, and BFSI companies are in the business of brands, across a slew of our services.



M V S Murthy predicts: “There will be increasing demand for the ability to cross-pollinate ideas. The culture of workplaces will need to be discovered as India opens and takes centre stage at global levels. I would say that we are no longer quarantined brands being sold in outlets, but we are the idea of India which domestic as well as international customers buy in. It’s not enough to sell a unit, dominance will require ownership of ecosystems and that is what we need to skill ourselves.”

M V S Murthy further added: “The simple thing we ask for every initiative in Federal Bank is – what is missing in this jigsaw? What more can we cover? How long should be the length so that the entire perimeter is enclosed with a complete solution? We work on micro-markets for instance, where the public, our customers, the small and medium enterprises as well as local culture and relics all become a part of the omnibus marketing approach.”

Empathy, long-term value creation, long-term brand building (as against chasing downloads or transactions), using technology optimally for customer delight, Data Science (as against regular analytics), deep understanding of cultures, and ability to reply to right technology in the right manner will be some critical skills that will be in demand in 2023. Sandeep said: “I and my team are learning by doing, tasking ourselves with out-of-the-comfort-zone assignments and projects, and training ourselves formally.”

### **LEARNING & RESEARCH SESSIONS**

Unlike 10 years ago, the tools available today are far more advanced and comprehensive. You can do a lot both in terms of quantity and quality. StoxBox has higher dependency on the partner, and they will slower the execution process. UV Vamsi said: “As such we do a daily 30-minute of group learning and research sessions on the tools that we use and also on the latest trends in the industry. I have observed that the solutions to complex problems lie in the basics which experienced marketers tend to ignore. Sessions like this help us in a big way in alignment and improving our ROIs.”

### **CONTENT THE UNDEFEATED WARRIOR**

According to UV Vamsi, with so much content being created every day, it’s essential to have creative skills that help brands stand out from the crowd. Skills such as design, storytelling, video production, and copywriting will be important in 2023.

Seema predicts: “There will be a bigger focus on quality over quantity, content marketing will become more data-led, ai-powered content marketing will grow in popularity shoppable content will drive social commerce, podcasts will see a steady rise short-form video will continue to see exponential growth, brands will boost engagement through interactive content, user generated content will remain a key strategy.”

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**Part 8****Mentoring for Skill Upgradation**

CMOs disused the key training programs for better reach:

**B**FSI companies have adopted new digital technologies to upskill employees. The training programs allow employees to gain proficiency in digital technology, including AI, ML, data science, business analysis, data visualisation, digital marketing, cyber security, etc.

Some have really formalized it. Diana shares: “We have developed the Shriram Management Education Scheme (MES), an 18-month MBA program that helps employees hone skills like influence, and empathy, and build business strategies. Also, we deployed hybrid learning - a blend of physical, instructor-led sessions with e-learning modules, to train employees for specific skills.”

**TRAINING PROGRAMS ON ANALYTICS & CX**

As businesses continue to shift towards digital, it has become crucial for marketing teams to stay up to date with the latest tools and techniques to better serve their customers. BFSI companies have developed several comprehensive programs to equip their teams with the necessary skills. This includes topics such as search engine optimization, pay-per-click advertising, and social and content marketing. The training includes hands-on exercises, case studies, and practical tips for implementing effective digital marketing campaigns.

Given the increasing importance of data in marketing, training programs that teach skills such as data analysis, data visualization, and analytics will be valuable for marketers. To keep up with the latest trends in digital marketing, companies may consider training programs in areas such as SEO, social media marketing, content marketing, email marketing, and mobile marketing. Training programs that focus on creating exceptional customer experiences can be useful for marketers.

UV Vamsi dives deep: “Topics such as customer journey mapping, customer feedback analysis, and customer relationship management can be covered in these

**Pankaj Kapoor** advocates training on marketing automation platforms for optimizing marketing workflows

programs. Training programs that teach creative skills such as design, video production, and copywriting can help marketers create memorable and impactful campaigns.”

Marketers undergo specialized training in user experience design, customer journey mapping, and customer segmentation. It encompasses interactive workshops and exercises aimed at developing a deeper understanding of customers and crafting more personalized experiences.

Pankaj shares more details: “We provide training on marketing automation platforms. It encompasses various aspects, such as the implementation and optimization of marketing workflows, leads scoring, and nurturing campaigns. Additionally, the training focuses on data management and integration with other marketing technologies. In addition to technical training, we also focus on soft skills training such as communication, teamwork, leadership, and time management. These skills are critical for marketers who need

to work cross-functionally and manage complex marketing projects.”

**MENTORING SESSIONS & CURATED PROGRAMS**

There were few curated marketing training programs designed to explore the different marketing facets beneficial for marketing team members in their roles. Seema lists: “These programs include knowing your market, digital marketing, search engine marketing social media communication understanding customer behaviours and motivation email marketing campaign and strategies content marketing, frequent workshops with Meta and Google.”

Anand quips: “We conduct regular mentoring sessions to bring team members up the curve. It is hard to replicate actual frontline sales experience, so we have recruited folks with relevant experience.”

Nippon Life India AMC focuses on product training, advanced SEO, neuro-marketing, data science, regulatory compliance, calendarized creative-development, and multi-agency pitches for festival calendars.

FIA Global develops messaging that resonates with the target audience and identifies opportunities to differentiate FIA from competitors.

Digital marketing helps companies to keep up with the latest digital marketing techniques, tools, and platforms and can help marketing teams improve skills in areas such as search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, email marketing, and content marketing.

Aiswarya further added: “Analytics and reporting along with sales training helps with sales enablement and understanding the sales processes and how to create content and materials that support the sales team. We also focus on some amounts of soft skills training and customer experience that focuses on understanding the customer journey and building customer loyalty.”

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## Part 9

# Tech Licensing & Human Intelligence in focus

Marketing experts share the details about the marketing investments in recent years:

In the past 3 years, there has been a noteworthy improvement in marketing technologies. The covid-19 pandemic led to a decline in traditional marketing methods and a surge in digital marketing channels. In the future, businesses are likely to continue investing in customer relationship management systems, analytical tools, and AI-powered technologies.

Sreekanth C K says: “With technology advancing rapidly, companies should be prepared to embrace change and make substantial investments in digital marketing technologies.”

### INCREASE IN INVESTMENTS

Over the last few years, there has been a significant increase in investments in marketing technologies, marketing skills, and marketing operations. Fintechs have invested in marketing automation platforms, CRM software and data analytics tools to improve their marketing efforts. These technologies have allowed companies to collect and analyze customer data more effectively, personalize their marketing messages, and automate various marketing processes, such as lead nurturing and email campaigns.

In terms of marketing skills, there has been a growing demand for digital marketing skills such as search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, and content marketing. Marketers are also expected to have a good understanding of data analytics, customer behaviour, and marketing technology tools. Marketing operations, which include the processes and technologies that enable marketing teams to operate efficiently, have also been a focus for many companies. This includes the implementation of agile methodologies, project management tools, and collaboration software to improve team communication and productivity.

Aiswarya believes that these trends to continue and possibly accelerate. With the increasing use of artificial intelligence and machine learning in marketing technology, there will likely be even more investment



**Aiswarya Chandrashekar** suggests opt-in programs & partnerships with third-party data providers as the data sources

in these areas. Additionally, as consumer behaviors continue to evolve with new technologies and channels, marketers will need to keep up with new trends and adapt their strategies accordingly. This may require investments in new marketing skills and operational processes.

Shriram Finance has seen a significant increase in investments by entities in developing skills, technologies, and marketing operations over the last 3 years. Financial institutions are exploring technology, such as data analytics, marketing automation, and artificial intelligence to enhance customer optimization, personalization, and marketing effectiveness. HR teams are rolling out training programs and providing access to educational resources to ensure that the marketing teams have the skills needed to succeed in today's rapidly changing marketing environment.

Diana shares the details: “In terms of marketing operations, we've observed a rise in collaboration and integration

among marketing, IT, sales, analytics, finance, MIS, and other departments within financial institutions. As a result, marketing activities are more efficient and better aligned with overall business goals.”

She adds: “We expect financial institutions to continue their investments in a bid to provide personalized and relevant experiences to their customers while meeting regulatory requirements regarding data privacy and security. However, as new technologies and customer preferences emerge, the specific focus of investments may shift over time.”

### INVESTMENT IN HUMAN INTEL

Federal Bank will invest more in human intelligence and make technologies the fuel for success. M V S Murthy reveals: “I don't see the need to be smitten by every new technology but plug in only what works for us. Over the years I have realized that good tech is like a diet program where less is more. The goal is to be lean and fit and not a cost center that drags the P&L. You can't eat all, so take what suits your palette and execute the plan with rigor and finesse.”

As per Sandeep, more resources are being deployed in tech licensing, implementation, and short-term-focused activities like performance marketing. Very little spend is being done on brand research, brand communication, and long-term brand building. I see organizations learning that brand strength and equity is paramount and a balance emerging between performance and brand marketing.

Fino Payment Bank's investment in martech tools has more than doubled in the last 12 months. The bank foresees a significant increase over the next few years. Anand reveals more: “It is an investment which pays rich dividends. Concerning skills, it's an investment in time and effort of the marketing leadership team to build capability. Structured (and customized) programs are hard to find and the one size fits all approach does not work.”

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## Part 10

# Top Medium: Social Commerce & Omnichannel

Finance companies have a special budget for marketing operations:

**T**here has also been a growing recognition of the importance of investing in marketing skills, as companies seek to develop talent that can effectively leverage new technologies, adapt to changing market conditions, and stay ahead of the competition. This has led to increased investment in training programs, mentorship, and other initiatives aimed at developing the skills and capabilities of marketing teams.

StoxBox will invest in marketing automation for the next 2 -3 years. UV Vamsi shares: “Work that takes a little, longer time, like video production, may see some improvement with the help of upgrades in editing software. However, mundane activities like digital marketing, campaign creation, lead management, customer calls, and related workflows will be fully automated.”

### MARKETING OPERATIONS

There has been a growing focus on streamlining and optimizing processes to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and increase the impact of marketing initiatives. This has led to investments in tools and technologies such as marketing automation,



**Aabhinna Suresh Khare** selects agile marketing methodologies for new strategies & real-time tactics

data management, and analytics, as well as a greater emphasis on cross-functional collaboration and alignment between marketing and other business functions.

UV Vamsi says: “Looking ahead, it is likely that investments in marketing technologies, skills, and operations will continue to be a priority for companies as they seek to navigate an increasingly complex and competitive business environment. However, the specific nature and scope of these investments will depend on a range of factors, including the nature of the business, the competitive landscape, and the evolving needs and preferences of customers.”

Aabhinna has seen a significant trend in investments in marketing technologies, marketing skills, and marketing operations over the last 3 years. There has been a greater focus on optimizing marketing operations and processes, including better collaboration between marketing and sales teams, improving lead generation, and nurturing, and streamlining workflows. This trend is

driven by the need to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing activities.

### INVESTMENT IN MEDIA

In recent years the mix between media has changed, and one of the significant changes is the increasing need to invest in paid media. With the need for social media platforms to monetize their platforms and the deliberate restriction of organic reach by the platforms, pay-to-play in social media is expected to rise.

Seema reveals: “Across the world, leading social platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, and LinkedIn remain the most prominent platforms. However, their growth rates are declining, and engagement levels are falling due to a lack of novelty and fear of privacy. While they are unlikely to be eclipsed by new competitors, other relatively new networks, such as BE Real and Supernova, are growing in importance.”

Digital marketing is core to many businesses’ strategies, and the technology that supports these efforts is continually evolving. Some trends will continue, including the growing importance of long-form educational content, chatbots and live chat, and voice search. New emerging trends include Google’s push for a cookie-less future. “While many marketing principles remain the same each year, businesses’ tools to achieve marketing success vary significantly over time. Newspaper advertising was once commonplace. Now, digital advertising and artificial intelligence play critical roles in the marketing tactics of businesses,” adds Seema.

Pankaj forecasts: “AI, Extended reality (XR), Web3, metaverse, big data and analytics, amongst others will be the technologies, companies will be leveraging in 2023 and beyond. Additionally, social commerce and omnichannel marketing uphold their position as the top medium for marketing and advertising.”

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Saraswat Infotech is serving banking industry for last 15 years and is committed to provide superior technology solutions for advancement of this industry in true manner.

## Finacle CBS on SaaS with all ancillary applications

On 14th May 2002, First Bank Live on Finacle CBS on SaaS basis integrating with all ancillary applications including NFS/IMPS Switch, Internet, Corporate Banking, H2HNACH with auto processing. Four more banks are in implementation stage.

## WhatsApp Banking, Merchant's QR, Digital Account Opening, PFMS

Our solution that can streamline banking operations, provide customers with better service, and help stay ahead of the competition. Our company's expertise in creating cutting-edge portals and digital solutions for banks.

We specialize in creating secure, user-friendly portals for WhatsApp banking, enabling customers to access their account information and perform transactions on-the-go. Our team also creates custom QR codes for merchants, allowing them to accept payments with ease. We can help banks set up a digital account opening process to make it easier for new customers to join the bank.

Our public finance management system is designed to make financial management simpler and more efficient, with features such as automated billing, expense tracking, and real-time reporting. Finally, our chatbot technology can help the bank provide instant support to customers through a conversational interface, saving time and resources while improving customer satisfaction.

## MICRO ATM

Saraswat Infotech already catering to 10000+ satisfied customers with over 11000+ MICROATM devices. Saraswat Infotech's MICRO-ATM platform handling transaction volume of more than 1 Crore. Saraswat Infotech's solution is used by various Fintech companies like Mahagram, VKV, MBNK and Net Paisa. Saraswat Infotech's target is to serve 10000+ customers with 25000+ device and total transaction volume upward of 5 Crore by 2023. Saraswat Infotech offers two types of MICRO ATM Solutions:

- ◆ Ycube Card reader: Combination of device and Mobile Application
- ◆ P1000: Mobile device having android platform

Dr.Devdatta Chandgadkar  
Director and Chief Executive Officer

CBS on ASP/Hosting	Loan Originating System (LOS)	Loan Collection System (LCS)	AML/CKYC	Shares	Treasury
RTGS/NEFT-Direct, IFTAS, Sub Member API	Retail/Corporate Banking	Digital Account Opening	E-mandate API	PFMS	Passbook, Cash Deposit Kiosk
NFS / IMPS / UPI Switch alongwith Transaction Monitoring Portal	ATM Card Management	Mobile Banking	Reconciliation	BBPS & Non BBPS with Billdesk	Merchant QR
Prepaid Card	Daily Deposit Collection Mobile App	Positive Pay Mobile Application	SMS Service, PULL SMS, Missed Call	Whatsapp Banking	Cheque Truncation System (CTS)



## BOB Financial: Winning in tier-2 towns

Shailendra Singh, MD & CEO at BOB Financial, reveals the company approaches to products, partnerships, marketing, technology, expansion and more:

**Manoj Agrawal: Please share figures about card issuance, card usage, average transaction amount, average outstanding balance, NPA, etc.**

**Shailendra Singh:** BOB Financial (wholly owned subsidiary of Bank of Baroda) has witnessed a significant increase in its credit card acquisition and spending figures for the current financial year. It has done a fresh acquisition of close to 1.1 million credit cards in the current financial year till now, which is twice the acquisition figure for last FY. Additionally, the monthly card spends have also increased by an impressive 260% year-on-year, reaching a total of about ₹17.5 billion.

The average ticket size (ATS) has increased by 18% over last year, which is also partial testimony of BOB Financial's commitment to providing exceptional credit solutions to its customers, even in challenging economic times. Furthermore, the receivables growth has been more than 120% for the same period, while the non-performing assets (NPAs) have come down from 8.7% to 4.8% levels on a yoy basis. These figures highlight BOB Financial's stability and growth trajectory.

We at BOB Financial are excited to continue delivering innovative credit solutions to our customers and are committed to maintaining this momentum in the years to come.

**There are 22 credit cards shown on the company's website, some of which are in partnership with other financial & non-financial organizations. Which kinds of organizations are most of these partnerships with? What kinds of companies do you expect to become partners in the future?**

As a part of BOB Financial's growth strategy, we are firm believers in the power of business partnerships. We have always recognized the importance



**Shailendra Singh is keen to partner with fintechs with a robust business model and a deep understanding of the consumer finance business**

of targeting new customers, especially those who are new to Bank of Baroda, and as such, we see great potential in partnering with well-known retail brands that have a substantial customer base. We are also open and keen to partner with fintechs with a robust business model and a deep understanding of the consumer finance business. A third but equally important category is institutions who bank with Bank of Baroda, where a cobranded credit card partnership can go a long way in cementing and growing the overall relationship. We strive to pursue partnerships in these 3 key segments, as we believe they offer significant potential for growth and value creation.

**With such a wide variety of cards, how does the company do the marketing? Is it customized for each card? Are there some common marketing activities?**

Yes, we have evolved over the years

and along with adding a wide variety of cards, we have also upgraded our card application platform which together have helped us in reaching to different set of customers through a number of marketing initiatives. To start with, we have segmented our credit cards keeping our brand motto of 'Credit for Everyone' in mind. In this line, we curate and offer cards for every stratum of society. And, since each card is designed for a specific audience group, it is evident to follow a product-specific marketing promotion & acquisition strategy.

We keep a digital-first approach in our marketing strategy formulation as well and use all digital channels for organic as well as paid promotions. We are committed to building brand awareness and creating engaging conversations with our customers by leveraging media and marketing. Our brand's message 'Your Anytime Money for Everyday Happiness' lies in the heart in everything we do, and we aim to reinforce this message through a range of diverse content buckets - offers, product and topical, to name a few, by keeping the customer engaged.

We understand the critical role that technology plays in transforming the customer experience. Given that, we are continuously deploying and integrating technology plug-ins to enhance and simplify every stage of the customer life cycle. Our goal is to enrich the customer experience, from onboarding to service to fulfilment, using state-of-the-art marketing technology.

On the channel front, we are building a robust channel ecosystem for BoB Credit Cards and reducing single channel dependence. As such, we are reducing our reliance on a single channel and expanding into alternate channels and pure digital channels for the open market. This approach allows us to reach customers where they are, using the channels that they prefer. We are strengthening our

traditional channels, such as Banca, while also exploring new channels that can help us reach a wider audience.

**What marketing approaches have been most successful for the company? What new marketing approaches are you thinking of trying out?**

We have realized that we need to forge meaningful connections with the stakeholders to create brand differentiation and drive brand consideration. Hence, we prudently emphasise on presenting BOB Financial as their 'Everyday Happiness' partner. In today's fast-paced and ever-changing market, it's important for us to stay agile and adapt our marketing strategy to the latest trends and events. That's why we will continue setting our marketing strategy around topical events. These events provide a unique opportunity for us to connect with customers who are already in the spending mindset and looking for seamless credit options to meet their festival needs. As we understand, Public Relations (PR) is one powerful tool that can help us not only build our market presence but also enhance our reputation.

Further, we believe that along with the right product, right positioning & communication, adopting latest technology has been & will be the key for sustainable success. Few key initiatives in this direction are: (i) latest Bobcard mobile app for on-the-move card management services, (ii) WhatsApp for business integration, (iii) Simplified 100% digital onboarding with CKYC integration & Digi-locker for VKYC (iv) latest digital marketing methods and marketing automation tools.

**What are the customer segments by age, income, geography, gender, etc, where the company's cards have achieved maximum reach?**

Bank of Baroda Credit Cards cover a wide spectrum of user base, and we have products designed for each of these. The median age of credit card user is 30 years with an annual median income of ₹0.8 million per annum. We enjoy a peerless

distribution capability covering all the states of the country, with our maximum users coming in from the tier 2 towns (~40%). Also, it is heartening to know that ~15% customers come from tier 5 & 6 towns which demonstrates that the cards and digital penetration in the country is become far more secular and is not just reserved to the precincts of the metropolitan cities. ~20% of our customers are women, and their SPC (spend per card) is pretty much comparable to that of men which is another positive metric.

**Briefly describe the programs to enhance card usage and their impact.**

We incorporate digital/social media strategies in all our marketing plans and count on joint marketing promotions with our offer partners to enhance card usage. Every day, customer gets an offer EDM delivered directly to their mailbox which has helped us not only in maintaining a regular engagement with our customers, but it has also rather proved to be a viable platform to communicate about any new offer, service, or company update. Apart, social media remains a focal point for drawing the attention of our prospective customers on various offers that we keep designing and wooing our existing customers to push usage and overall brand impact.

**What is the reach of the company among the merchants? What are the expansion and diversification plans?**



Bank of Baroda Credit Card is present among all the top merchants and E-comm platforms of the country. Also, we are expanding our reach to cater niche brands like Ritu Kumar, Masaba, Myntra Luxury and Tata Cliq premium segment. We are targeting high volume through our offers on bus ticketing, IRCTC, etc. As, we have a card for every segment, we are also offering and targeting hyper local & regional merchants to capture market for tier 2 & 3 cities. This would provide customers a diverse option to bring ease in their spending through our card.

**Cards and payments are an extremely technology intensive segment. Who are the top 5 technology partners? Is the company partnering with fintechs? If yes, then in what areas?**

Current and relevant technologies are a necessary ingredient not only growth, but even for survival in the fast-evolving payment ecosystem. With credit cards, in addition to a strong origination system, we also require an equally efficient card management system, fraud risk management (FRM) system, analytics platforms and tools, CRM systems, campaign management systems, etc. We are utilizing services of some of the most well-known partners across these capabilities. In order to facilitate easier client origination, onboarding, and service, we are also collaborating with fintechs. Also, we are evaluating fintechs that provide 'Credit Card As A Service' (CCAAS) and other emerging areas relevant to the credit card industry.

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# Widening the partner footprint

Founder Atul Monga shares the business focus and the technology approach at BASIC Home Loan:

**Manoj Agrawal: What are the geographies that the company is present in? How many branches and how many employees?**

**Atul Monga:** BASIC Home Loan has 30 branches with a presence in locations like Agra, Bangalore, Delhi-NCR, Faridabad, Gurgaon, Gwalior, Hyderabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, Meerut, Mumbai, Noida and Patna. Presently, we have about 250+ employees.

**Which are your primary customer segments? What is their income range? What is the loan amount range?**

The primary customer segments that the company lends to are those looking for affordable housing. They can be salaried individuals, small business owners, and self-employed persons. Depending on the lender's criteria, the loan amount range could vary between ₹5 lakhs to ₹5 crores.

**Who are the various partners from whom BHL collects information for processing loan applications?**

We partner with more than 60 banks, public sectors, HFCs and NBFCs. With these partnerships, we have helped numerous individuals and families finance their homes, with more than 15,000 crore applications processed to date.

**Who are the various partners with whom BHL partners for sourcing leads?**

BHL partners with various financial influencers (like chartered accountants, direct selling agencies, financial advisers, and property advisors). Along with these, BHL has partnered with several real estate developers and brokers for the source of leads. The following are our sourcing channels:

**Agent sourcing channel (Affiliates channel):** As our go-to-market strategy, we started the business with an agent-sourcing channel through which we generate leads. It is shown as an affiliate in the MIS.

**Direct online:** This channel was started in April 2022. We generated leads which



Atul Monga

were converted to logins but disbursements couldn't happen as there was a lockdown in April and May 2022. Disbursements started from June onwards and in July this channel contributed about 18 percent of overall disbursements.

**Real Estate Builder sourcing:** In July we started pilots with 4-5 builders and corporate brokers. We have started receiving leads from this channel from August onwards.

**Online Affiliates:** This channel was started to capture digital real estate brokers and community management platforms (such as Apna Complex) in August 2022. We started a pilot with Housing.com to source leads. Currently, we have received about 200 leads from this channel which are currently being processed. Post pilot we will go for direct API integration with their system.

**Which are the prominent digital platforms where BHL is actively present?**

BASIC Home Loan is actively present on LinkedIn, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. On these platforms, we frequently post useful videos, tips and advice for homebuyers and their homeownership stories. We also share information about company events, special offers, and new product launches.

On YouTube, we upload informative videos, interviews with financial experts and client testimonials. In addition, we use our Instagram and Facebook pages to post engaging visuals about the home-buying experience. We post useful pictures and interesting memes as well. Meanwhile on LinkedIn, we leverage digital presence to post career opportunities and updates related to the mortgage industry.

**What SFA and CRM systems does the company use?**

All technology and product development at BASIC is done following the principle "built for purpose". For instance, we offer a live tracking system for home loan applications, which allows customers to see the status of their loan application in real-time, making the process more convenient. BASIC Home Loan is at the forefront of the latest technology trends in the home loan industry. The following products help in automating the home loans:

**Omnichannel CRM solution:** This solution supports paperless logins to sanctions, automates documentation and the disbursement process.

**Product Eligibility Matrix (PEM):** For checking the available offers the agent utilizes our in-house matchmaking engine called Product Eligibility Matrix (PEM). It is the first time in the industry that we are not just matching the customer profile, but also the property profile to show recommendations for available products. PEM matches the offers accurately based on digitized credit policies of the banks. Our current login to sanction rate is 70 percent.

**Dynamic Document Rule Engine:** Our document rules engine software ensures first time right documentation for login, ensuring faster TATs and has brought operational efficiency in agent workflows for the first-time in the industry.

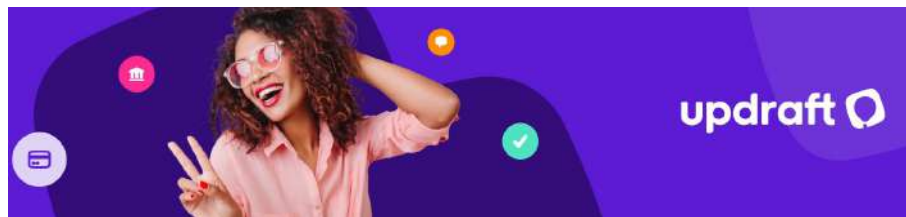
**Automated backend for agents:** This feature allows efficient customer KYC and document verification using technology.

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## Updraft's noble mission: Save customers from debt trap

British fintech firm Updraft helps people come out of debt trap following reckless use of credit cards, overdrafts and BNPL loans:



London-based fintech disruptor Updraft offers a mobile solution that enables people to break away from expensive debt, whether on account of credit cards, overdrafts or buy-now, pay-later (BNPL) loans. It offers a financial planning and disruption solution, unique in unsecured lending markets. The firm recently won the best digital initiative award in the lending category at the Banking Tech Awards instituted by FinTech Futures.

Updraft claims it is on a mission to help people break up with their credit cards and better manage their money. Its solution is designed to change habits, with purpose-built lending products and contextual coaching and conversations.

The solution is in fact a personal finance ecosystem within a mobile native experience. There is a Credit Score & Report that helps users understand what affects their financial positions and gives suggestions to improve it. The Report gives access to high quality low-cost credit products with Updraft Credit.

### USE OF OPEN BANKING

The Updraft app connects to the customers' existing bank accounts and cards using Open Banking APIs and then uses AI to send the customers alerts when one is at risk of overspending on his or her account. If there is an overspend, instead of the customer's bank automatically giving an overdraft, Updraft intervenes to replace the overdraft with a low interest loan. This means the customer has access to the money he needs without expensive overdraft fees.

Updraft supports current accounts and credit cards from banks including American Express, Bank of Scotland,

Barclays, Halifax, HSBC, Lloyds and Nationwide. The customer gets to view all his spending and borrowing at a single place. Added to this tool is a 2-way messaging service, called Money Talks, available to members whenever they want to discuss and find a solution for the mess they are into .

Its loans carry a representative average percentage rate (APR) of 17.9%, but the specific cost of an Updraft loan will depend on several factors, including how much one borrows and what the loan tenure is.

Updraft has another tool, called Goals, where customers can set extra payment credit goals to pay off even faster. There is also Updraft Payce, where users are helped to convert their credit card purchases into cheaper, faster and flexible pay-off plans.

### BENEFICIAL FINANCIAL HABITS

Updraft combines smart algorithms, open banking and credit reference data to build a person's financial profile. It then gives recommendations to establish practical and beneficial finance habits and effective routes to pay off borrowings. It leverages AI/ML to analyze banking transaction data and provide personalized goals and tasks to individuals to save money, build savings and earn access to high quality credit. Its system also analyzes transactional and mobile engagement data to better underwrite credit risk, thereby lowering the cost of credit.

Updraft fits in a crucial space where millennials/Gen Zs face the ever-increasing cost of living, compounded by ever-rising inflation and freeze in wage growth. Most of them resort to

unsecured borrowing. Especially in the UK, this is a problem for the millennials/Gen Zs, with debt continuing to escalate. The problem is tougher for those who recklessly use credit cards and resort to BNPL purchases. They simply do not have the means to save enough to own a home or for other important life goals. It is estimated that balances on credit card, overdraft and BNPL loans have touched £50 billion mark in the UK.

### CUSTOMERS' INATTENTION

It has been found that for the victims, the core issue is inattention. There are factors like product complexity, psychology (self-efficacy, shame) and a situation where there is lack of time to plan because of busy work lifestyles. Customers then tend to overpay for the use of credit.

Updraft has some 300,000 users and surpassed £110 million in gross lending. More than 50% of users make lasting changes with credit cards and other revolving balances. It is estimated that using Updraft, they could save £1000 interest cost over the lifetime of a loan and achieve £1.6 million annual savings and £13 million lifetime savings.

Updraft's Founder and CEO Aseem Munshi, says the aim is to educate and empower the customers, turn them from borrowers to savers and help them make changes that pay off, allowing them to live confident and financially carefree lives by lifting them out of debt.

The fintech firm has raised £108 million in equity and debt to power its growth strategy and deliver savings to its user base, now standing at 300,000. The funding round was led by NatWest, and Hampshire Trust Bank also joining to create a £160 million senior debt facility for the business. It is now planning to open its Series B soon with an ambition to build a £1 billion business over the next 5 years.

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This article has been compiled based on publicly available information on the web, particularly the bank's own website.

# Gold loans rising; so is competition

The cooperative banks are targeting most of the gold loan processing to be done digitally:

**S**hantanoo Joshi, Vice Chairman, the Akola Urban Co-operative Bank; Alka Shrivastava, Chairperson, Lakshmibai Mahila Nagrik Sahakari Bank and Vasant Kulkarni Deputy CEO, Sharad Bank, provide insightful updates in the gold loan business of their respective banks.

**Mehul Dani: What are the tenures of gold loans, what are product features in the gold loans of your bank in the current FY?**

**Shantanoo Joshi:** We have 3 products under gold loan. The short-term loan is for a period of 1 year, wherein the repayment is permitted to be made as bullet payment i.e. the principle and interest for the whole year is payable on the due date.

The other product is for a tenure of 3 years, wherein the repayment is to be made in 36 EMIs. In this product, the repayment capacity of the borrower is to be considered.

Off late, we have introduced another product, wherein the borrower is sanctioned a limit to a running account. The borrower can operate his account within the limit sanctioned as per the valuation of the gold pledged by the borrower. This limit is reviewed every year and is renewed once in 3 years.

**Alka Shrivastava:** Tenure for gold loans of Lakshmibai Mahila Nagrik Sahakari Bank up to ₹1 lakh is 1 year and loans above ₹1 lakh are term loans. In this, the loan term and instalment will depend on the borrower's income and ability to repay the loan. Loan is given up to 70% of the purity and valuation of gold. Gold loans are given by our bank at 9.5% interest.

**Vasant Kulkarni:** The maximum tenure for gold loan of Sharad Bank is 36 months. For loans up to ₹2 lakhs, loan period is 12 months with bullet payment and for loans above ₹2 lakhs period is 36



**Shantanoo Joshi** informs that Akola bank launched a product specifically for business community to overcome their temporary liquidity crisis

months but with EMIs.

**What is the value and volume of gold loans of your bank in the last 3 FYs?**

**Shantanoo Joshi:** The Akola UCB had 1079 gold loan accounts aggregating to ₹142 million as on 31 Dec 2020, which grew to 1237 aggregating to ₹155.4 mn as on 31 Dec 2021 and further to 1708 aggregating to ₹215.4 mn as on 31 Dec 2022. Thus, there is substantial growth in the portfolio.

**Alka Shrivastava:** Lakshmibai Mahila Nagrik Sahakari Bank, Gwalior is a mahila bank and it lends to women only. Most of the women to whom our bank gives gold loans, belong to the lower class. We are trying to give maximum gold loan because this loan is considered a secured loan. Due to this, the risk also remains less.

**Vasant Kulkarni:** Our gold finance



**Alka Shrivastava** says gold loan is considered a secured loan and due to this the risk also remains less

range is between ₹190-200 million. There is no significant rise during 2022-23.

**What are the trends during last FY, current FY and outlook in your bank's gold loan business?**

**Shantanoo Joshi:** If we consider the position as on 31st December 2020, 2021 and 2022, we can see a growth in the gold loan portfolio. The bank, with effect from October 2022, has given special focus on gold loan as there is ample scope for funding. The borrowers are borrowing mainly for their agricultural activities. Some borrowers request for the liquidity gap, which is bridged by the short-term loans. Off late, the business community is also noticed to be borrowing against gold.

Gold is considered to be valuable item and needs to be stored safely. The same is used for overcoming temporary liquidity problems. Thus, borrowers prefer safety and liquidity through gold loans. If the limits sanctioned are used meticulously,



the interest amount can be saved. Thus, our bank launched a product specifically for business community to overcome their temporary liquidity crisis.

**Alka Shrivastava:** Since the gold loan is safe and does not have much formalities, this loan is safe for all those, who take the loan as well as for the bank which gives it. The interest rate on this loan is also low and according to the purity of the gold, the loan is easily available to the borrower. Therefore, the lower-class women, to do self-employment for the fulfillment of small needs, take this loan more. And also repays it in a fixed period.

**Vasant Kulkarni:** Gold business is not moving as per my expectation due to tough competition from NBFCs, credit societies, public prefers gold loans from them.

**Please describe profile of borrowers and their needs.**

**Shantanoo Joshi:** The branches of the Akola Urban Co-operative Bank, Akola are located in district places (C grade cities) and taluka places. The borrowers are more of agriculturists and salaried people. During the current year, the business class borrowers are added to the list. The age profile is between 35 to 55 years and the income is from agriculture, salary or business.

**Alka Shrivastava:** The economically lower-class women, to do self-



**Vasant Kulkarni concedes that there is tough competition from NBFCs and credit societies and that public prefers gold loans from them**

employment for the fulfillment of their small needs, take this loan more. And also repays it in a fixed period. Mostly women within the age group of 35 to 60 years take loans.

**Vasant Kulkarni:** Our customers are mainly middle class, farmers dominated by male members with few exceptions. They are mostly adults between 40-50 years.

**How are you making the loan process paperless and digital?**

**Shantanoo Joshi:** The product is integrated under LOS System. Thus, the application, appraisal, assessment, sanction everything is through paperless banking process. Moreover, it is time saving and fast. The digital transfer of proposals saves time for the approval. The system also helps opening of borrowal accounts without any manual intervention.

**Alka Shrivastava:** Laxmibai Mahila Bank is using Core Banking Software of Pune based Jalgaon Infotech. Most of the work of the bank, including that of gold loans, is done only through software. Only the loan form has to be filled by the applicant.

**Vasant Kulkarni:** Still there is lot of paperwork involved for gold loan of Sharad Bank due to legal constraints. We are in the process of exploring other alternatives.

**What is the outlook in your bank's gold loan business for the next financial year.**

**Shantanoo Joshi:** Gold loan business will see a 25% growth in the next financial year. During the last one year, the first 2 quarters were flat and there was absolutely no growth. Third quarter, we launched a special drive to cover gold loan borrowers. Thereafter, we are seeing good growth happening in the gold loan business. So, that is the business we see this year. The economic activity is picking up, so we are focused on gold loan, there is good business prospect.

**Alka Shrivastava:** Laxmibai Mahila Bank is trying to give maximum gold loan because this loan is considered a secured loan. Due to this the risk also remains less. Gold loan accounts don't turn NPAs. As the borrower has her gold mortgaged, she has to worry about depositing the instalment on time. And the borrower in fact pays instalments on time.

**Vasant Kulkarni:** Day by day the gold loan portfolio is shrinking as DCC banks are giving interest-free loans to farmers.



Gold loan customers meet of Akola UCB

mehul@bankingfrontiers.com.com

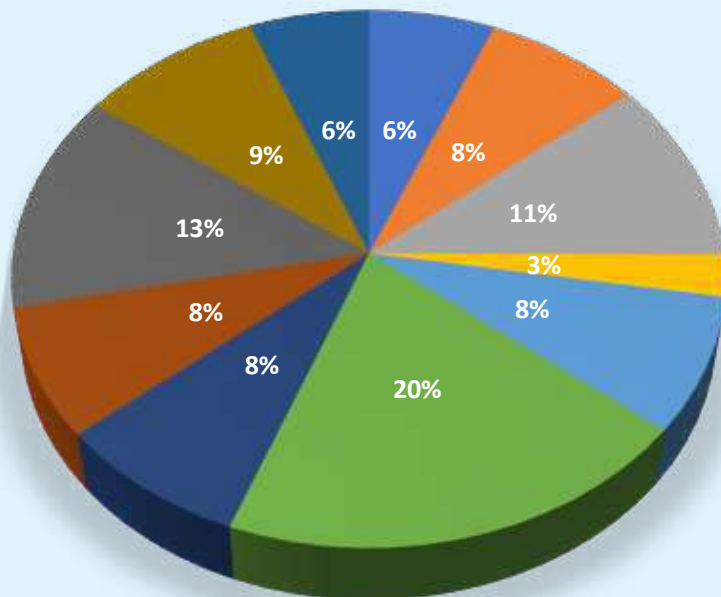


## GL, HL & EL popular among women borrowers

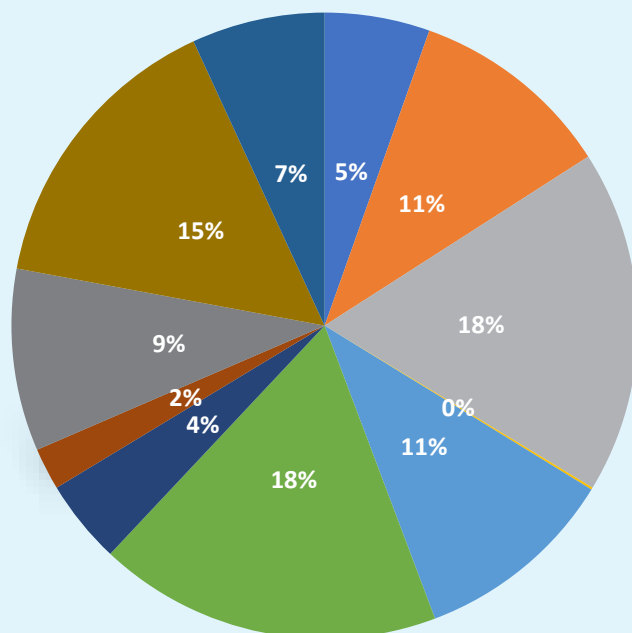
CRIF has come out with a special report on women borrowers, which says that the portfolio outstanding retail loans availed by female borrowers is ₹26 trillion as of Dec 2022, an increase from ₹20.7 trillion as of Dec 2021, a yoy growth of 25%. The share of female borrowers in overall retail loans (by value) has increased from 25.3% to 26% during the same period.

**Share of Female Borrowers across Major Retail Loan Products (by Portfolio Outstanding)**

- Home Loan
- Business Loan
- Personal Loan
- Agri + Tractor Loan
- Property Loan
- Gold Loan
- Auto Loan
- Education Loan
- 2-Wheeler Loan
- Consumer Durable Loan
- Remaining Retail Loans

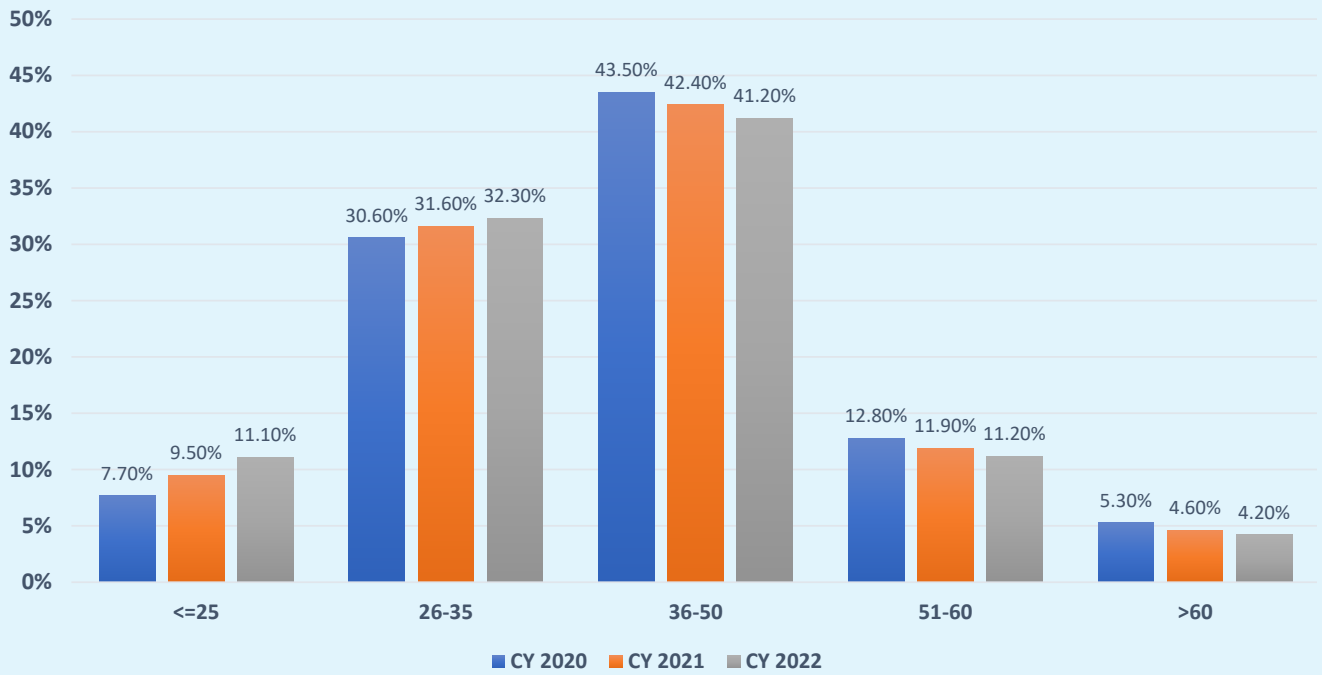


**Share of Female Borrowers across Major Retail Loan Products (by Active Loans)**

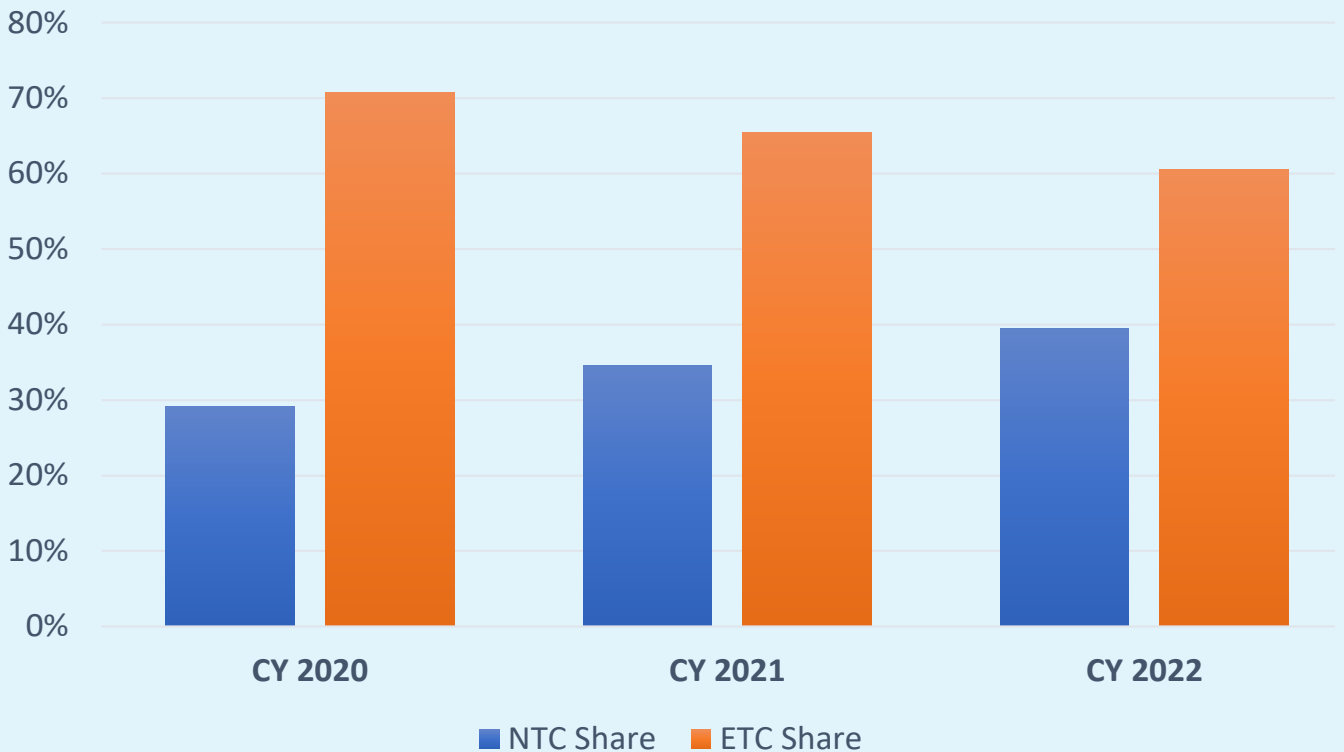


- Home Loan
- Business Loan
- Personal Loan
- Agri + Tractor Loan
- Property Loan
- Gold Loan
- Auto Loan
- Education Loan
- 2-Wheeler Loan
- Consumer Durable Loan
- Remaining Retail Loans

### Originations to Female Borrowers by Age Groups (Major Retail Loan Products)



### New to Credit (NTC) Originations to Female Borrowers (Major Retail Loan Products)



### **Michel Longhini joins FAB as Group Head of Global Private Banking**



Michel Longhini has been appointed Group Head of Global Private Banking at First Abu Dhabi Bank. His mandate is to enhance the bank's private banking offering and expand its international footprint. Michel was with Edmond de Rothschild in Geneva, Switzerland, where he was the CEO of Private Banking. Earlier,

he was the CEO of Private Banking at Union Bancaire Privée in Geneva, where he contributed to the bank's growth in Asian markets, Switzerland and the UAE. He has studied at Emlyon Business School of France.

### **Vidyalaxmi promoted Sr VP at BNP Paribas-India**



Vidyalaxmi V has been promoted as Sr VP, Brand & Communications at BNP Paribas-India. She was earlier VP, Brand & Communications at the French bank. Earlier Vidyalaxmi worked as Associate Director at IDFC Bank and as Associate VP at Kotak Securities. She has completed an Executive Program in Applied Finance from the Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta as well as a PG in Journalism and New Media from Indian Institute of Journalism & New Media, Bangalore.

### **Pavan Agrawal is Group President & Head of Technology at Yes Bank**



Pavan Agrawal has been appointed Group President & Head of Technology at Yes Bank. He was earlier with Tanla Platforms as VP - Information Technology. He has also worked for Wipro Technologies as its Global Head - IT. Pavan has earned a B.E in Electronics and Telecom and an MBA from the Karnataka State Open University.

### **Abhishek Jain is Head - Government Business at Bandhan Bank**

Abhishek Jain has been appointed Head - Government Business Products, Solutions & Implementation at Bandhan Bank. He joins Bandhan Bank from Cashfree Payments where he was Senior Director & Vertical Sales Head, Government & Education. He has also worked for IDFC First Bank as VP and Team Leader - Government Cash Management Sales & Products. Abhishek has earned his PGDBA in Marketing from KJ Somaiya Institute of Management Studies & Research and B.Tech in Computer Science from DIT University.



### **Vineet Agrawal is EVP, Retail Branch Banking at Yes Bank**

Vineet Agrawal has been appointed EVP, Retail Branch Banking at Yes Bank. He comes to Yes Bank from Kotak Mahindra Bank where he had spent nearly 15 years and was last holding the position of Cluster Manager - Branch Banking. He has also worked for ICICI Bank as Branch Operations Manager. He has earned his MCA in Computer Science from Indira Gandhi National Open University.

### **Debabrata Das is DGM at RBI**



Debabrata Das has been promoted as DGM at RBI. A career central Banker, who has put in nearly 17 years of service in RBI, he was last holding the position of AGM in RBI's Hyderabad office. Debabrata has been visiting/guest faculty at various management institutes. He has also worked for SEBI as a Manager. He has completed a number of executive management programs, including a program in fintech, banking and applied risk management (FBARM) from the Indian Institute of Management, Lucknow in 2021 and a certification in Financial Market from Yale University in 2020.



### **Bhanu Vohra is MD & India Head, Citi Commercial Bank**

Bhanu Vohra has been appointed MD and India Head, Citi Commercial Bank. A Citigroup veteran having spent more than 20 years with the group, was earlier MD and India Head - Global Subsidiaries Group. He has also functioned as MD - Global Markets, Global Head of FX - Citi Private Bank, based in London. He was Vice-Chair of FEDAI for 2 years. Bhanu earned his CA from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India in 2000.

### **Jeremy Awori is CEO of Ecobank Group**

Ecobank Transnational, the parent company of pan-African banking group Ecobank, has named Jeremy Awori as CEO of the Ecobank Group. He has more than 25 years of banking industry experience, including in leadership role, Ecobank says, including as CEO and MD of Absa Bank, Kenya for nearly a decade. He was earlier with Standard Chartered Bank in its Middle East and Africa unit. Jeremy earned his MBA in Finance and International Business from McGill University in 1996 and his graduate degree in Science from the University of Manchester in 1991.





## People Track in Banks

### **Sunil Mehta** is Chairman of IndusInd Bank



Sunil Mehta is the new non-executive Chairman of IndusInd Bank. He was a Director at Adani Green Energy. Sunil has spent more than 40 years in banking and financial services domain having held leadership roles in institutions like Citibank, AIG, State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank and Yes Bank. Since 2000 he was with AIG and was responsible for all AIG businesses in India. He is graduate from Shri Ram College of Commerce, CA and an alumnus of the Wharton School of Management.

### **Byron Carroll** steps down as CEO of digital bank Tnex

Byron Carroll has stepped down as CEO of Vietnamese digital bank Tnex. He will continue to have a position on the company's board. Byron has worked for Bank of Ireland, National Bank of Abu Dhabi and ACC Bank (now ACC Loan Management).



### **Babita Agarwal** is Director - CCIB at StanChart



Babita Agarwal has been appointed as Director - Corporate Commercial & Institutional Banking (CCIB) at Standard Chartered Bank. She has been with Standard Chartered Bank for more than 5 years and was earlier Director - Global Subsidiaries, CCIB. Previously, she has

worked for State Bank of India for nearly 8 years and last held the position of VP - Credit & Risk Rater. Babita completed CFA from Institute and has a PGDM in Finance from the Institute of Management Technology, Nagpur. She is also a CS.

### **Neelkanth Mishra** set to join Axis Bank

Neelkanth Mishra, who has been co-head of Asia Pacific strategy at Credit Suisse Group, is set to join Axis Bank. He has resigned from the Swiss bank. He is slated to head the research department at Axis Bank. Mohit is part of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Economic Advisory Council. Neelkanth has worked for Infosys and Unilever. He has acquired a B.Tech in Computer Science and Engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur.



### **Toby Mason** is COO at Bermuda Monetary Authority



Toby Mason has been appointed COO at Bermuda Monetary Authority. He was previously COO at Allica Bank, London. He is also involved in providing advisory services to digital banking startups and has functioned as a Member of Payments Board of UK Finance. Toby has a M.A. in Classics and Modern Languages from the University of Oxford. He was based in London, UK, and now has moves between Hamilton, Bermuda and London.

## People Track in Mutual Funds, AMCs, NBFCs

### **Sumitha Nandan** is ED at Manappuram Finance



Manappuram Finance has appointed Dr Sumitha Nandan as Exec Director. She was Exec Assistant to MD & CEO and Sr Vice President in charge of Corporate Coordination. She was also in charge of Online Gold Loan in the capacity of CEO-OGL. Dr Sumitha is a medical professional with MS in Obstetrics & Gynaecology.

### **Aparna Kuppuswamy** is CRO at Bharat Pe

Aparna Kuppuswamy has been appointed Chief Risk Officer (CRO) at Bharat Pe. She moves from SBI Card where she was CRO. She has also worked as Director - Credit Policy at Ameriprise Bank in Phoenix, Arizona and as Product Risk

Head at ABN Amro Bank. Aparna earned her Masters in Finance & Control from Delhi University in 1993.



### **Jagdish Capoor** appointed Chairman of Invent Assets Securitization & Reconstruction



Invent Assets Securitization & Reconstruction has appointed central banker Jagdish Capoor as its Chairman. He was the Dy Governor of RBI and Chairman of HDFC Bank and the Bombay Stock Exchange. Besides, he has served on the boards of several leading banks, including State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda, National Housing Bank, NABARD and EXIM Bank.

**Shekhar Sood is new CFO at Bajaj Capital**



Shekhar Sood is the new CFO at Bajaj Capital. He was with Socomec Group as CFO India and Business Controller INO APAC. He was Assistant Finance Controller at Ambuja Cements. Shekhar earned his CA in 2008 and CS in 2010. He also has completed Master's Degree in General Management (Strategic Marketing and Operations from Punjab Technical University in 2017.

**Hitesh Sethia to head Jio Financial Services**

Reliance Industries has appointed Hitesh Sethia, a top executive from McLaren Strategic Ventures as the CEO and MD of its newly set up financial services unit, Jio Financial Services. He was Head of Europe at McLaren Strategic Ventures. Hitesh has earlier worked for ICICI Bank in several responsible positions - as Business Head of Transaction Banking, as Chief Executive and Regional Head - Hong Kong/China and as Head of Corporate Banking, ICICI Bank UK. He has also functioned as Country Head - Germany of the UK subsidiary and as AVP, Retail Banking of the bank's branch in Toronto, Canada. Hitesh has completed an Advanced Management Program in General Management from Harvard Business School in 2019 and a program in Strategic Human Resource Management from Michigan Ross School of Business in 2014. He earned his CA from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India in 2000.



**B. Gopakumar appointed MD & CEO Axis Mutual Fund**



Axis Asset Management Company has appointed B. Gopakumar, as MD and CEO of Axis Mutual Fund. He was MD and CEO at group company Axis Securities. He replaces Chandresh Nigam who has stepped down as the CEO of the company. Gopakumar was MD and CEO of Axis Securities since October 2019. He was earlier ED and CEO at Reliance Securities (Reliance Money). He has also worked for Kotak Securities as EVP and Head of Broking and for Kotak Mahindra Bank as EVP and Head of Priority Banking. He has completed a Senior Executive Leadership program from Harvard Business School in 2019 and earned his MBA from Mangalore University in 1994.

**Sumit Manchanda is CRO at ARCIL**

Sumit Manchanda has been appointed CRO at Asset Reconstruction Co (India). He was with DCB Bank as Head - Credit. He has also worked for Citibank India as SVP - Credit Risk and for DSP Merrill Lynch as Manager - Debt Sales.



Sumit earned his CA from the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India in 2000, earning 39th rank on an all-India basis.

**Rupesh Kumar B. is new Head, Operations, Business Process & Compliance at Shriram Finance**

Rupesh Kumar B. has been appointed Head Operations (Consumer), Business Process & Compliance at Shriram Finance. He was with Yes Bank as EVP heading credit shared services, retail assets and co-lending DA. He has also worked for Srei BNP Paribas as AVP handling Regional Operations, Accounts and Admin. Rupesh Kumar is a CA, having completed it in 2006.



**Vikas Muttou is COO and Head of Member Services at BFIL**



Vikas Muttou has been appointed COO and Head of Member Services at Bharat Financial Inclusion, a wholly-owned subsidiary of IndusInd Bank. Vikas was MD and CEO at RBL Finserve, RBL Banks microfinance business. He has also worked as Chief Business Officer at Bharat Financial. Vikas has over 27 years of experience across banking and financial services, including microfinance, retail banking, consumer finance, and P&L management. He was previously with ANZ Grindlays, Standard Chartered, ABN Amro and RBS.

**Deepak Mohanty to head PFRDA**

The Government has appointed Deepak Mohanty as the Chairperson of the Pension Fund Regulatory & Development Authority (PFRDA). He was the Whole-Time Member (Economics) at PFRDA overseeing areas of development and regulation of pension funds. He was with RBI as ED, overseeing enforcement of banking regulation, risk management, internal audit and inspection, financial stability, monetary policy, economic research, and statistics. Deepak has also worked with IMF as a Senior Adviser. Deepak has He has graduated with a bachelor's degree in economics with honors from Master's degree in Economics from Jawaharlal Nehru University and Yale University.



**Abhisar Sharma is CEO of NeSL subsidiary**

Abhisar Sharma has been appointed CEO of National e-Governance Asset Data, a wholly-owned subsidiary of NeSL, which provides the services of an Account

## People Track in Mutual Funds, AMCs, NBFCs



Aggregator for retrieving or collecting, consolidating, organizing and presenting financial information. He has been associated with institutions like India Post Payments Bank, National Payments Corporation of India, Aviva, Citibank, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank. Abhisar has qualifications in advanced management, banking & financial services from IIM Calcutta, IIBF Mumbai and Vellore Institute of Technology.

### **Rohit Chawda** appointed EVP at Taurus AMC

Rohit Chawda has been appointed EVP at Taurus Asset Management Co. He was with Shriram Asset Management



Co as COO. He has also worked for Risk India.com as Principal Consultant and as SVP and Head Internal Audit at Peerless Funds Management Co.

### **Vijay Sachidanand** is new COO at Niro

Vijay Sachidanand has been appointed COO at fintech firm Niro. He will lead Niro's overall business operations, including product management. He was earlier with GAIN Credit as CEO - Software as a Service. He has also worked as Vice President - Product Management at Drafty. Vijay acquired an MBA from London Business School in 2009 and a B.Sc in Economics, Finance and Multinational Management from the Wharton School in 1995.



## People Track in Insurance

### **Sanjay Manglani** is Head of Insurance at Capri Global Capital



Sanjay Manglani has been appointed Head of Insurance - Capri Global Capital. He will be managing the entire insurance portfolio at the company. Sanjay comes to Capri Global from SBI General Insurance where he was Head - RRBs and PSU Banks (Bancassurance). Head - RRBs and PSU Banks (Bancassurance). He was with SBI General Insurance for more than 12 years. He has also worked for SMC Group as Regional Manager - General Insurance. He has an MBA from Balaji Institute Of Modern Management.

### **Alok Rungta** is Head of Business Transformation and CFO at Future Generali India LI

Alok Rungta has been appointed Head of Business Transformation & CFO at Future Generali India Life Insurance. He was Chief of Retail Propositions (Life, P&C and Health) and Head of Health & Protection at AXA Philippines. He has also worked as Asia Regional Financial Controller based in Hong Kong for AXA and for Bharti AXA Life Insurance in India as CFO. Alok is a CA.



### **Shankar Ram Annur** appointed SVP at Anand Rathi Insurance Brokers

Shankar Ram Annur has been appointed Senior Vice President, Anand Rathi Insurance Brokers. He was SVP at Bharat Re-Insurance Brokers. He has also worked for First Policy Insurance Brokers and Tata AIG General Insurance. Shankar is a CA (Inter).



### **Avez Sayed** is new CRO at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance



Avez Sayed has been appointed CRO at Bajaj Allianz General Insurance. He was with SBI General Insurance as CRO and Head Internal Audit and Fraud Investigation. Avez has also worked for ICICI Lombard. He has a Master's in Insurance and Risk Management from City, University of London and an MBA in Marketing, Sales, Finance and Business Strategy from Bharati Vidyapeeth.

### **Sunit Vakharia** appointed Head - Technology at Reliance Nippon Life Insurance

Sunit Vakharia has been appointed as Head - Technology at Reliance Nippon Life Insurance. He was earlier at DBS Bank as Head - Consumer Banking Technology. Sunit has also worked at U GRO Capital as CTO, at BOB Financial Solutions as CIO and at HSBC Technology





as Sr VP, IT Development. He has undergone a program in Leadership Management Training and in Strategic Thinking from the Wharton School and earned his B.Tech from Bombay University.

### **Siddhartha Mohanty to be interim Chairman of LIC**



Siddhartha Mohanty, MD, has been given a 3-month charge as Chairman of Life Insurance Corporation of India. This is an interim arrangement and he will continue to look after his functions as MD. The arrangement became necessary as the incumbent chairman M.R. Kumar did not receive any extension in service and demitted office on 13 March. Siddhartha was MD of LIC and CEO of LIC Housing Finance.

### **Tablesh Pandey is new MD, LIC of India**

Tablesh Pandey has been promoted as MD of LIC of India. He was ED at the insurance company. He replaces B.C. Patnaik. As ED, he was handling Enterprise Risk Management and was CRO at the Actuarial Core Group in LIC. He has over 35 years of service in LIC and has held various responsibilities in the government insurance company. Tablesh is an Associate Member of the Institute of Actuaries of India and completed his B.Tech in Agricultural Engineering in 1986.



### **M. Jagannath is MD, LIC**

M. Jagannath has been promoted as the new MD of the Life Insurance Corporation of India. He had joined LIC as a direct recruit in 1988 and has a rich experience in insurance marketing. He has held various important assignments and led large teams. His previous assignments include CEO and MD of LIC (Lanka), Colombo. He has also functioned as Zonal Manager, South Central Zone. A commerce graduate, Jagannath has completed CA (Inter), PG Diploma in Marketing and International PG Diploma in Life Insurance, General Insurance & Risk Management from the Institute of Insurance and Risk Management, Hyderabad. He also an Associate Member of the Insurance Institute of India.

### **Rathin Lahiri is Head - Marketing & CSR at SBI General Insurance**

Rathin Lahiri has been appointed Head - Marketing & CSR at SBI General Insurance Co. He was earlier Chief Business Development Officer at Mahindra Manulife Mutual Fund. He



has also worked for DBS Bank as SVP & Head Strategic Alliances. Rathin has also been seed investor in at least 2 startups - The New Shop, a chain of 24x7x365 convenience retail stores with omni-channel presence, and WorkIndia, one of the country's largest blue and gray-collar job portal. He completed a Master's degree

in Marketing from SP Jain Institute of Management & Research in 1992

### **Rufus DSouza is new CIO at Ageas Federal Life Insurance Co**

Rufus DSouza has joined Ageas Federal Life Insurance Co as CIO. He was Dy SVP and Head of IT Applications at SBI General Insurance. He was with SBI General Insurance for more than 10 years. Prior to that he was Head of Delivery - India, Middle East, Africa at eBaoTech International. Rufus has completed PGCPM in General Management from the Indian Institute of Management, Indore in 2009 and has a B.E. in Electronics from Shivaji University.



### **Anup Bagchi to head ICICI Pru Life Insurance**

Anu Bagchi has been appointed MD and CEO of ICICI Prudential Life Insurance Co. The appointment will take effect from 19 June, when the incumbent N.S. Kannan retires from the firm. Anup, who is ED at ICICI Bank, will be ED and COO at the insurance company from 1 May. He is already a non-executive director at the company. At ICICI Bank, he heads the wholesale banking, transaction banking, markets group and proprietary trading group. Prior to his stint at ICICI Bank, he was MD and CEO of ICICI Securities. Anup had joined the ICICI Group in 1992. He has a management degree from the Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore (Batch 1992) and an engineering degree from the Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (Batch 1990).



### **Mohit Agrawal is Head - Tech Operation at Niva Bupa**

Mohit Agrawal has been appointed Head -Technology Operation at Niva Bupa Health Insurance Co. He was Vice President - IT at Canara HSBC Life Insurance Co. He has also worked as Associate Director - IT at PNB Metlife India Insurance Co. Mohit completed his MBA in Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services from Symbiosis Centre for Distance Learning and has a B.E. in Computer Technology from Nagpur University.





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