



Surya Kant

EDITORS' NOTE *Surya Kant is responsible for overseeing and strengthening customer relationships and revenues across markets that account for more than 75 percent of TCS' global revenues. He also plays a key role in expanding the company's range of technology and service offerings. Additionally, Kant is a passionate supporter of U.S. STEM education and career initiatives – particularly for women, minorities and those in underserved communities, through major national partnerships such as Million Women Mentors and US2020, and TCS' signature campaigns, goIT and Ignite My Future in School. He received his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering with a specialization in electronics from Delhi College of Engineering, and his master's degree in electrical engineering with a specialization in computer technology from IIT Delhi.*

COMPANY BRIEF *Tata Consultancy Services Limited (tcs.com) is a leading IT services, consulting and business solutions organization that has been partnering with many of the world's largest businesses in their transformation journeys for the past 50 years. With revenues of more than \$20 billion in 2018, TCS is ranked as one of the top three most valuable global IT service providers. Its consulting-led, cognitive-powered integrated portfolio is delivered through its unique location-independent Agile delivery model, which is a benchmark of excellence in software development. TCS was recognized in 2019 as a Global Top Employer by the Top Employer Institute, and as one of the Best Employers globally in the Forbes 2000 list. In the 50th year of its founding, TCS was ranked the fastest growing brand by value in the IT Services sector, globally, over the past ten years – growing 14.4 percent year-on-year. TCS' proactive stance on climate change and award-winning work with communities across the world have earned it a place in leading sustainability indices such as the Dow Jones Sustainability™ World Index, the MSCI Global Sustainability Index, and the FTSE4Good Emerging Index.*

A Focus on Excellence

An Interview with Surya Kant,
President – North America, U.K. and Europe, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)

How do you define the TCS difference and what has been the key to the company's strength and leadership?

We live in an age where consumers are a segment of one, and they expect nothing less than a first class, personalized experience. As technologies such as artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, analytics and machine learning are becoming more pervasive, this is guiding many of the worlds' leading businesses through a growth and transformation journey, using our Business 4.0 framework.

We are helping to shift the paradigm, from companies having to optimize with scarce resources to now harnessing an abundance of talent, capital, data, and computing resources. This is changing business behaviors to drive mass personalization, create exponential value, leverage ecosystems and embrace new risks. TCS is redefining every aspect of its business and that of its customers.

At the core of the success is our ability to be agile, resilient and leverage the contextual knowledge of a talented, diverse global workforce of more than 424,000 employees from 150 nationalities around the world.

Are large global companies the focus for TCS or do you also serve smaller entrepreneurial companies?

Both; we primarily work with more than a third of the large, established Fortune 500 companies, but also collaborate with emerging, fast-growing start-ups. And if you look at verticals or industries, we work in banking, financial services, insurance, retail, manufacturing, travel, transportation, hospitality, high-tech and communications and information services businesses. We work with both large and small companies because all large companies, at one time, were small companies.

Is a C-Suite relationship critical for the work TCS provides and do you work at multiple layers within your clients?

We start with C-Suite and then we work with various levels, because the work that we ultimately come up with, the business transformation models and information technology systems that we devise, have to be implemented and reach from the front-end, which is where the customer experience is, to the back-end of the company, so we need to work with various levels from C level down.

Is there consistent messaging and strong cooperation for TCS between the various geographical regions in which you work or is it more of a localized focus?

I would say it works both ways. You have to be global, because businesses are global these days, even if some primarily operate in one market, so they require a uniform interface around the world. It is becoming increasingly important as newer technologies like cloud and AI are evolving and enabling businesses to become truly global with better control over their data resources.

At the same time, you find some markets where customers are a lot closer to technology or further along in their adoption and digital transformation cycles, so you have to adapt based on the specific requirements. The key is that TCS operates globally and offers enormous scale and contextual customer knowledge, while being deeply embedded in local markets and being a leading local recruiter of talent in providing cutting-edge customer solutions.

How challenging is it to find the talent you need to help clients through their transformations?

In this industry, talent really plays a huge part. The number one asset of our company for our customers and partners is really our people. In that sense, the ability to attract really diverse, talented people from across the world becomes very important. This means that working with and giving back to the communities is a very big magnet for our diverse workforce around the world. As you know, giving back is in our DNA, as 50 percent of our ownership is indirectly held by two philanthropic trusts.

The ability to attract a talented workforce and to keep them, nurture them and grow them, as TCS and our customers grow, is a very big part of the glue that keeps this company together. As we work on the Business 4.0 growth and transformation journeys of our customers, it becomes important for us to also bring in specific skills and talents.

We are also reskilling our own workforce. The whole technological landscape has been changing and becoming far more agile.

This includes the whole area of cloud migration, artificial intelligence, machine learning and automation, as well as the area of data analytics and insights. It is very important for us to ensure that we continue to reskill our people as we go through our own transformation to support the future success of our customers.

To accomplish this, we have brought in a number of learning systems and transformed them from a majority of classroom training to

something which is available anywhere, any-time on your mobile or other platforms. This has been a huge success. We've been able to reskill and upskill over 300,000 of our people in a comprehensive range of technologies, platforms and agile methodologies. With more than 424,000 people, we've come a long way with our own reskilling efforts, and that is a big reason for our success.

Will you discuss the focus TCS places on building a diverse and inclusive workforce and the importance of having diverse thought and experiences when making business decisions?

We recognize that our clients represent many different industries and collectively serve millions of diverse customers around the world. We also realize that the technology solutions that we provide must reflect the global needs and global challenges of our clients. These can best be served through a diverse and global workforce, whether that's diversity of experience, culture or thought process.

This year, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of TCS. We crossed the \$20 billion mark in revenue and our market capitalization exceeded \$100 billion. More than 165,000 of our global 424,000 workforce are women. In our view, inclusive businesses are those that transcend the traditional notions of diversity in terms of gender or ethnicity and truly bring a diversity of skillsets, mindsets, experiences and cultures to foster innovation.

This way, diversity becomes the driver of business, as people bring unique perspectives to the organization which enhances the solutions that we develop, how we develop them and the way we deliver them to our customers. In a quickly changing world of work, inclusion is the glue that binds people together with a sense of identity, belonging and purpose.

Do you find that those coming into the business are looking for companies that are not only focused on the bottom line, but are purpose-driven?

From the founding of the Tata Group 150 years ago, our parent group started as the custodian of public good and calibrated its mission to address the world's most urgent needs. Our founder said that in a free enterprise, the community is not just another stakeholder in business but is, in fact, the very purpose of its existence.

At TCS, which is now 50 years old, we stay true to the Tata Group's DNA by harnessing the power of technology to solve the complex problems and create innovative solutions for our customers, employees and the communities where we work and live. The impact of our work on society is compounded in several ways, through the economic value added in these markets as a large employer who provides highly paid, highly rewarding careers and as a community leader empowering society to be more equitable and inclusive.

We have a workforce with an average age of 28 years. At the same time, we also have a multigenerational workforce and we have a global presence and customers across almost every industry. We are a purpose-driven brand, which allows us to foster long-term partnerships with our customers, attract and retain highly

skilled talent and be a trusted partner in change and the upskilling of the global workforce.

When you grow to the size and scale that TCS is geographically and in numbers, is it challenging to maintain an innovative edge and how important is it to have innovation at the heart of the company?

It is very important to have innovation at the heart of the company, because we have to bring in innovative solutions to more and more complex problems that we are facing – whether in business or society.

At TCS, we have our Co-Innovation Network, which looks at innovation as a collaborative process. We have our own labs across the U.S. and other geographies, where we work on new solutions, rapid product prototyping and advanced research alongside customers. We also partner with universities like Cornell Tech and Carnegie Mellon, where we have provided large grants to establish centers of excellence and joint industry-academic research into areas such as human-machine collaboration, biotechnology and autonomous vehicles.

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We also have venture capitalists and start-ups as part of the Co-Innovation Network. We scour the world for appropriate technologies that our customers would find interesting. We bring all of these together for the benefit of our customers to help them gain a comparative edge and solve problems that they're facing. Some of those problems could be how they help the communities where they work and live to flourish, so innovation is very important.

How are advanced technologies such as AI impacting the workforce?

Technology is certainly having a major impact on business and customer experiences,

so we need to have people with deep areas of knowledge across a host of technologies and industries in order to help propel our customers' Business 4.0 transformations.

We have also been working with the World Economic Forum over the past three years on issues including the skills gap and have focused on three major challenges.

Today's workforce needs to be reskilled. Some assessments state as far as 52 percent will need to be reskilled by 2022.

The second is that tomorrow's workforce will need to be trained for jobs that don't exist today. Two thirds of the jobs in 2030 and beyond will be new. That means students who enter primary school today will need to be taught by teachers who are aware and confident about what those changes will be, and the skills required.

The third relates to inclusion. Women and minorities will need to be integrated into this transformation by design, and more than 50 percent of the disparate impact of technology adoption currently falls on women and minorities, which needs to be addressed with scalable solutions through industry working alongside educational and government institutions.

How we address these challenges will determine how society reacts to the shifting work patterns in business throughout the world. We consider this not only a moral obligation, but fundamentally critical to business to ensure that we bring all of the stakeholders along with us on this new journey.

At TCS, we have a three-pronged approach. First, by harnessing our contextual knowledge – re-skilling and up-skilling of our own workforce. The second is preparing young people for 21st century careers, and the third is empowering women, minorities and underserved groups through our various educational and mentoring programs.

Our signature goIT and Ignite My Future in School programs run in North America, and we run Future IT in Europe and Bridge IT in India. These programs are very important.

What has made your experience at TCS so special for you?

I've been very fortunate to work in many geographies and industries, helping our customers on their path to growth and transformation.

TCS also has a big focus on realizing employees' potential. One dimension is professionally. Another is in the work we do with communities. A third is their well-being. For instance, we have a program called Fit for Life that is run within the company and has more than 200,000 active participants.

The one thing that has really carried me through my career is TCS' focus on excellence. Whatever you're doing, you must do it to the best of your abilities and to the highest standards. Where you are today is because of what you did yesterday, but where are you going to be tomorrow is because of what you are doing today.

People cannot rest on their laurels. There is a restlessness in the company – that constant concern that we are doing the best for our customers, our employees, and our stakeholders. I think that is what is so special. ●