

SUPPLY CHAIN TRIBE

by CELERITY

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OCTOBER 2026
Volume 10 Issue 10

THE ANATOMY OF A LASTING LEGACY

Laureates on the Memories
Behind the Milestones

LEGENDS... UNFILTERED

Offstage and Off-script:
Hall of Fame Voices,
Beyond the Spotlight



PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The Stories That Shape Leaders



Dear Readers,

Leadership is not a title. It is a journey.

And in this issue of Supply Chain Tribe, we explore that journey through the voices and experiences of leaders who have walked it.

Our Cover Story brings together the 2026 inductees into the Supply Chain Leadership Hall of Fame. Beyond their achievements and professional milestones, we asked them to look back – at the choices, challenges, people and experiences that shaped them – and, more importantly, to share the lessons they would pass on to the next generation of leaders. Their stories remind us that leadership is built over time, through experience, resilience, curiosity and the willingness to keep learning.

We also revisit the keynote by Amb. Dr Dunston Pereira, delivered at our 8th Celerity Supply Chain Tribe Conference & Awards. For those who missed the conference, this is an opportunity to engage with his perspectives on leadership in an increasingly high-stakes world.

And in Up, Close and Personal, our Supply Chain Laureates step away from their professional roles to share the personal experiences, influences and moments that shaped their journeys.

Because behind every leadership story is a human story.

We hope this issue inspires you to look beyond the designation – and discover the journey behind the leader.

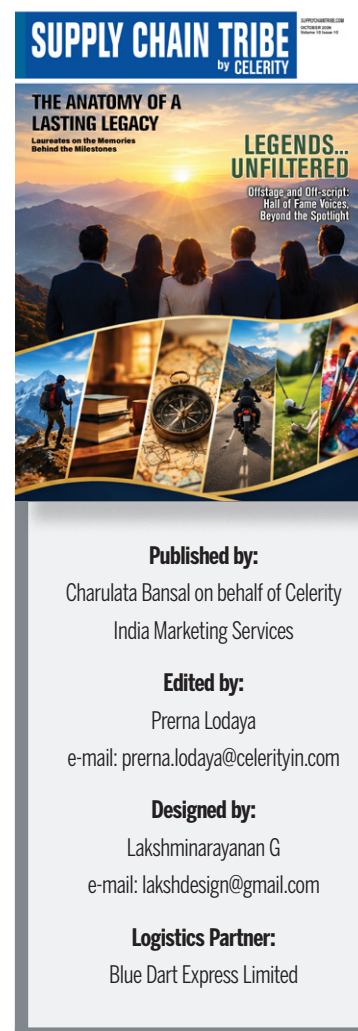
Happy reading!

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C O N T E N T S

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LEGENDS... UNFILTERED

Great leadership isn't a straight line—it's a mosaic of tough decisions, unexpected pivots, and decade-defining transitions. Beyond the titles, awards, and corporate bios lies the real story of leadership. This Cover Story brings you face-to-face with the icons who shaped an era—delivering candid, unscripted conversations about the moments that truly mattered. From high-stakes crossroads and demanding assignments to the lessons forged in times of total market transformation, these are raw, authentic reflections on what it took to navigate the past and what it means to lead the future.

The Legacy of Leadership – Avinash Gupta, Global SCM Head, Solar Industries India Ltd.

The Power of Perspective – Dr. Atul Kharate, Chief Operating Officer, Indian Oil Adani Ventures

The Curiosity Edge – Deepak Thukral, Sr. Executive Officer – Supply Chain, Maruti Suzuki India Ltd.

Stay Curious, Stay Grounded – Dr. Sachin Ghosalkar, Senior Vice President – SCM & Operations, Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd.

The Architecture of Lasting Leadership – PV Sheshadri, Executive Vice President, Reliance Retail

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The Leadership Advantage in the Era of Disruption

According to Amb. **Dr. Dunston Pereira, Group Chief Executive Officer, The Private Office of H.H. Sheikh Ahmed Bin Faisal Al Qassimi, UAE**, in a world shaped by geopolitical uncertainty, shifting supply chains and accelerating technological change, leadership can no longer be about maintaining control. It must be about building the ability to respond, reinvent and emerge stronger.



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The Anatomy of a Lasting Legacy

The Supply Chain Laureates turn the spotlight on leaders whose sustained contributions, strategic agility, and proven impact mark them as the vanguard of their fields. Going beneath the surface of traditional headlines, these conversations explore the defining moments in progress: the choices that opened new directions, the crucible assignments that demanded a different response, and the evolving philosophies that shape executive excellence. These narratives illuminate the true architecture of leadership in motion—revealing not just where the journey has led so far, but the intellect, strategic pivots, and defining choices that build a lasting legacy piece by piece.

Leading Where the Path is NEW – Ashish Tripathi, Assistant Vice President – SCM & Procurement, SWAN Defence & Heavy Industries (SDHI)

Built for the Next Ascent – Manoj Kumar, Chief Supply Chain Officer, Amber Enterprises India

Think Big, Start Small, Learn Fast – Vikas Sharma, Chief Operating Officer, Zepto

From Experience to Impact – Vinay S. Chauhan, Regional Lead, Indirect Procurement – BSAPIC, Bridgestone EMIA

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THE LEADERSHIP ADVANTAGE IN THE ERA OF DISRUPTION



In a world shaped by geopolitical uncertainty, shifting supply chains and accelerating technological change, leadership can no longer be about maintaining control. It must be about building the ability to respond, reinvent and emerge stronger, emphasises **Amb. Dr. Dunston Pereira, Group Chief Executive Officer, The Private Office of H.H. Sheikh Ahmed Bin Faisal Al Qassimi, UAE**, during his keynote address at the recently held 8th Celerity Supply Chain Tribe Conference & Awards 2026...

WE are at a defining moment for leadership. Across the world, businesses are navigating a convergence of pressures unlike anything we have seen before. Geopolitical tensions are reshaping markets and trade. Supply chains remain vulnerable to sudden shocks. Economic uncertainty continues to test business confidence. At the same time, artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies are rapidly changing how organisations operate, compete and make decisions. The pace of change is leaving little room for complacency.

What makes this moment particularly challenging is that disruption is no longer isolated or temporary. A geopolitical event in one part of the world can affect supply chains and markets thousands of kilometres away. A new technology can challenge an established business model in a matter of months. Customer expectations are evolving faster, while organisations are under constant pressure

to become more responsive, efficient and innovative. In this environment, the traditional assumptions around leadership are being challenged.

For decades, leadership was built around command, control, stability, hierarchy and long-term planning. But when the environment itself is constantly changing, leadership cannot simply be about preserving stability. It must be about preparing organisations to respond when stability disappears. That, to me, is the big shift.

We do not simply need leaders who can help organisations survive disruption. We need leaders who can understand disruption, learn from it and turn it into opportunity and competitive advantage.

FROM CONTROL TO AGILITY

The first shift is from control to agility. The leader of yesterday was often expected to have all the information and make the important decisions. But today's environment is far too



The leader of tomorrow must create an organisation where information flows quickly, decisions are made closer to the customer and people are empowered to act. In today's world, the organisation that adapts faster often wins.

complex and fast-moving for leadership to remain concentrated at the top. The leader of tomorrow must create an organisation where information flows quickly, decisions are made closer to the customer and people are empowered to act. *In today's world, the organisation that adapts faster often wins.*

We cannot always predict what is going to happen next. But we can build organisations that are ready to respond faster. This requires a different approach to leadership. It requires trust. It requires empowerment and it requires leaders to recognise that their role is not to have every answer, but to create an environment in which people can respond effectively when the answers are not immediately clear.

FROM RESILIENCE TO STRATEGIC RESILIENCE

The second shift is from simply being resilient to becoming strategically resilient. Geopolitical tensions can disrupt markets. Supply chains can change overnight. Technology can make established business models obsolete. Resilience helps organisations absorb these shocks. But strategic leadership must go further. *It must ask: Where is the opportunity in this disruption? Can we build a more agile supply chain? Can we enter a new market? Can technology give us an advantage? Can we move faster while competitors are waiting?*

Every challenge can also create an opportunity to think differently. The winners of the future will not necessarily be those who avoid disruption. They will be those who learn faster from disruption and act faster because of it. That is the difference between simply recovering from change and using change to move forward.

FROM COMPETING TO REINVENTING

The third shift is from simply competing to continuously reinventing ourselves. We often ask who our competitors are.

That will always remain an important question. But perhaps an even more important question today is: What could make our current business model irrelevant? The greatest threat may not come from a traditional competitor. It could come from AI. It could come from a new technology. It could come from a new generation of consumers. Or it could come from a company that does not even exist today. The conventional definition of competition is changing. That is why leaders must create cultures where questioning, experimentation and innovation are encouraged. Organisations must be willing to challenge themselves before the market does it for them. The ability to continuously reinvent is becoming one of the most important capabilities an organisation can build.

AI AND THE HUMAN ADVANTAGE

Artificial intelligence represents another major shift in the leadership landscape. AI is not simply another technology for organisations to adopt. It is changing how businesses operate, how decisions are made and how competitive advantage is created. But as technology becomes more powerful, human leadership becomes even more important. AI can process information. But it cannot replace judgment, courage, empathy, ethics and purpose. The leaders of tomorrow will therefore need to combine technological intelligence with human intelligence. Technology can make organisations faster and more efficient. But leadership must ensure that progress remains connected to people, values and purpose. The question is not whether technology will change the way we lead and operate. It already is. The real question is whether we can combine its potential with the qualities that remain uniquely human.

THE COURAGE TO CHANGE

So what does the new leadership model look like? **It is leadership built on vision instead of hierarchy, agility**

instead of rigidity and empowerment instead of control.

It combines resilience with opportunity, technology with humanity and purpose with performance. Most importantly, it requires the courage to change before we are forced to change. Leadership is not tested when everything is going according to plan. Leadership is tested when the plan no longer works. When markets change. When uncertainty arises. When teams are under pressure. And when the future is unclear. That is when leadership matters most.

BUILDING THE STRENGTH TO WIN WHAT COMES NEXT

Perhaps the most important question we should ask ourselves is not simply: Can our organisation survive the next disruption? Instead, we should ask: Can our organisation emerge from the next disruption stronger, faster and more competitive? Because disruption is no longer an event. Disruption is the environment in which we operate and leadership must evolve with it.

The old leader said, "Follow me."

The new leader says, "Let us navigate this together."

In essence, the BIG SHIFT today is that leadership today is not about predicting every turn the future will take, it is about building the capability, trust, relationships and collective strength to succeed in whatever future arrives. Our choices must reflect our hopes, not our fears.

As we look ahead, the opportunity before us is clear: to build bridges, create opportunities, empower people and inspire meaningful change.

One World. One Vision. One Ecosystem.

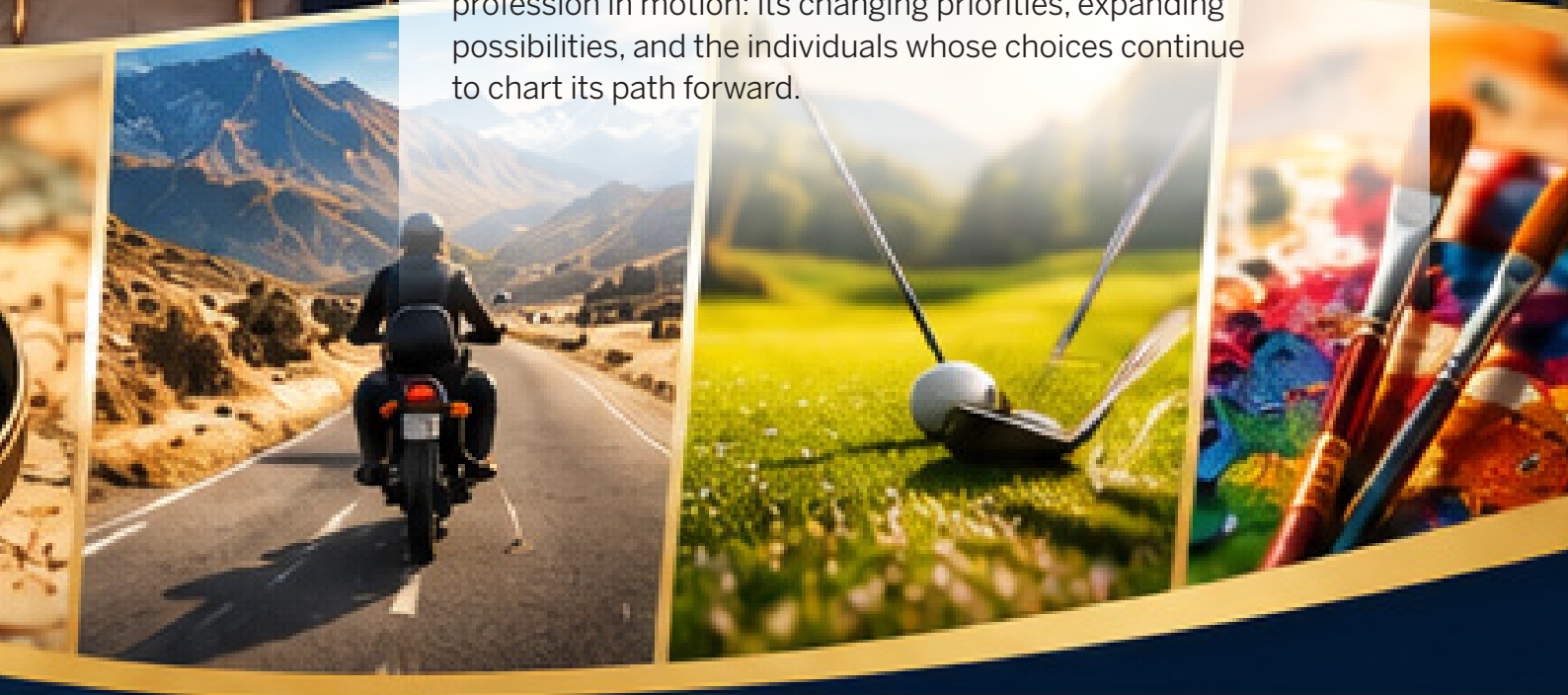


LEGENDS... UNFILTERED

Great leadership isn't a straight line—it's a mosaic of tough decisions, unexpected pivots, and decade-defining transitions. Every industry is defined by leaders who didn't merely observe change; they steered through transforming markets, shifting operational models, and technological leaps that fundamentally redefined leadership across successive chapters.

Beyond the titles, awards, and corporate bios lies the real story of leadership. This Cover Section brings you face-to-face with the icons who shaped an era—delivering candid, unscripted conversations about the moments that truly mattered. From high-stakes crossroads and demanding assignments to the lessons forged in times of total market transformation, these are raw, authentic reflections on what it took to navigate the past and what it means to lead the future.

Together, these voices create an intimate portrait of a profession in motion: its changing priorities, expanding possibilities, and the individuals whose choices continue to chart its path forward.



THE LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

The true arc of leadership is measured not simply by what is achieved, but by what is built to endure. Across decades of leading people, businesses and change, **Avinash Gupta, Global SCM Head, Solar Industries India Ltd.**, has come to see leadership as the ability to create belief, cultivate ownership and enable others to rise. His journey reflects an evolution from delivering outcomes to building capability, from directing people to creating leaders—and an enduring conviction that while businesses, technologies and ways of working will continue to transform, it is people who ultimately create institutions that last.



After a career of sustained achievement, what would you describe as your personal success mantra—and how has it evolved with experience?

My personal success mantra has always been deeply people-centric, and with experience, it has become richer—and, importantly, humbler. At the Centre of every successful organization are people who are willing to give their heart and mind to what they do. The leader's role is to involve people, give them a sense of the larger picture, create ownership and

then give them the freedom to deliver.

I have increasingly come to believe that sustained success cannot be created through individual brilliance or the influence of a particular leader. If people are not taken along, success can be temporary, lasting only as long as the external stimulus or the leader remains.

For me, the real measure of leadership is therefore **legacy**. A leader has created lasting impact when the organization continues to perform, evolve and create leaders even after that leader has moved on. That requires leaders to be

coaches and mentors, not just decision-makers—to create the environment, set the direction and then allow people to do the job.

Is there a book that has had a lasting influence on the way you think or lead? Is there a particular idea from it that you have consciously brought into your own life or leadership?

There are several, but a few stand out. One of the more recent ones is 'Leading from the Back' by Ravi Kant, former

Managing Director of Tata Motors. The philosophy behind the book resonates strongly with me: **give people big, challenging goals**, create the belief that they can achieve them, provide the necessary support and then allow them to take ownership. This idea had a profound influence on many managers of my generation who had the opportunity to work under or learn from Mr. Ravi Kant. I have seen first-hand how people often rise to a challenge when leaders give them both the ambition and the confidence to take it on.

'The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People' has also influenced my thinking, particularly around personal effectiveness and disciplined leadership. *'Customers for Life'* is another book that has resonance with my automotive background.

I would also mention Ron Kaufman's *'UP! Your Service'*. It reinforces something I strongly believe in: **Service is still Undervalued in many organizations**. Service is not merely a frontline function; it is an organizational culture. I believe creating a genuine service culture needs to be discussed at the board level because superior service can become a significant and sustainable source of differentiation.

Mentors can shape a leader long after a particular chapter has ended. Which mentor or influence has had a lasting impact on you, and what aspect of their thinking continues to stay with you?

Some of the strongest influences on one's leadership journey come from bosses who are not merely senior executives but genuine role models.

I have had the privilege of learning from several members of the Tata Motors executive leadership team. One lesson that has stayed with me is the importance of **communication and the ability to create a compelling storyline**. Leadership is not simply about having the right answer; it is about making people understand why it matters, where we are going and why they should come along. That lesson has stayed with me throughout my career, and I consciously pass it on while coaching younger professionals.

Another important lesson has been about **scale and speed**—the ability to

challenge assumptions, question self-imposed limitations and move decisively when an opportunity presents itself. At the same time, I have learnt that meticulousness is not a differentiator; it is hygiene. The real differentiators are the ability to see the larger picture, communicate it compellingly, move with speed and create confidence in others.

You have led across generations with very different expectations of work, purpose and success. How do you adapt your leadership to connect with younger professionals while allowing them the space to bring their own strengths and perspectives?

Leadership across generations requires understanding rather than comparison. Earlier generations were generally more comfortable with face-to-face interaction and direct communication. Younger professionals are often far more comfortable with digital communication, social platforms and technology-enabled collaboration. Their expectations around purpose, career and workplace experience have also evolved. I don't see this as a question of one generation being better than another. It is about recognizing that **the context has changed**.

Younger professionals want to understand the Why, not merely the What. Therefore, leaders need to provide greater context, explain the larger purpose and then give people sufficient space to form their own views and bring their strengths to the table. The leadership challenge is to provide direction without becoming prescriptive. In my experience, when people understand the larger purpose and feel trusted, they bring considerably more energy and ownership to their work.

As a new generation of leaders enters positions of greater responsibility, what qualities do you believe will become increasingly important—and which qualities remain timeless?

In a rapidly changing and increasingly VUCA environment, **agility will become one of the defining leadership attributes**. Leaders need to have their ear to the ground, continuously read signals from the market, customers,

technology and people, and be prepared to make decisions despite incomplete information. The speed at which circumstances change today means that leaders cannot wait for perfect clarity before acting. At the same time, some leadership qualities remain timeless: integrity, humility, curiosity, courage, empathy and the ability to take people along.

I often think of the modern leader as a **chess player**—thinking several moves ahead while remaining prepared to change the next move when the situation changes. The ability to balance long-term thinking with rapid execution will become increasingly important. The leader's job is not only to identify the change but also to **align the organization quickly enough to respond to it**.

The business environment continues to change at remarkable speed. What do you do personally to remain open to new ideas, new ways of working and perspectives that may be very different from your own?

I remain an avid learner. I read, participate in training programs, attend industry forums and, perhaps most importantly, I consciously try to learn from people irrespective of their age, experience or position. Listening without preconceived judgement is extremely important. We all carry biases—about people, ideas, technologies and even generations—and these biases can become barriers to learning.

I recently spent time learning about AI and built an application for portfolio assessment. The experience was less about the application itself and more about the realization of how quickly the boundaries of what is possible are moving. That experience reinforced something I strongly believe **curiosity is a competitive advantage**. The excitement of discovering something new keeps me open to new ideas. I believe leaders should never become so experienced that they stop being students.

Having worked with people across different generations and personalities, what do you look for beyond credentials when

For me, the real measure of leadership is LEGACY. A leader has created lasting impact when the organization continues to perform, evolve and create leaders even after that leader has moved on. That requires leaders to be coaches and mentors, not just decision-makers—to create the environment, set the direction and then allow people to do the job.

you recognize someone with the potential to lead?

Credentials tell you what someone has achieved. They do not necessarily tell you what someone can become. When I look for leadership potential, I look for a combination of **groundedness, intellectual curiosity, authenticity and the ability to connect with both the subject and with people.** I value people who are unassuming but street-smart; people who can understand complexity but simplify it for others; and people who can think on their feet rather than waiting for perfect conditions. I also look for OWNERSHIP. A potential leader does not constantly look for someone else to solve the problem. They instinctively ask: “**What can I do about it?**” For me, that mindset is often a stronger indicator of future leadership potential than a strong CV.

Over the years, has there been a leadership practice or principle that has become so integral to the way you work that it now comes almost instinctively?

One practice that has remained constant throughout my career is **accessibility.** I have always tried to maintain an open-door approach. People should be able to reach out to their leader—even if it means interrupting them—and know that they will receive a patient hearing. That principle extends beyond the people who work directly with me. I continue to respond to messages and stay connected with people whom I may have met only once. Sometimes people simply need help finding direction when they feel stuck.

Another instinctive practice is to **break complexity into smaller, solvable problems.** I also remain strongly data-driven in my approach to decision-making. And I believe

in preparing thoroughly—even for the smallest meeting or interaction. Preparation creates clarity; accessibility creates trust; data creates discipline; and simplifying complexity enables execution. Over time, these have stopped feeling like techniques and have simply become part of how I work.

What interests outside business continue to hold your attention, and have any of them influenced the way you approach your professional life?

Sport has been a significant influence on me. I have played sport myself and also follow several sports closely—cricket, hockey, tennis and golf among them. Sport teaches some powerful lessons about business and leadership. It teaches you to be fiercely competitive, but also to remain on a continuous cycle of **practice, learning and improvement.** Years of preparation, self-evaluation and refinement eventually translate into performance. It also teaches humility. You have to accept defeat with grace, learn from mistakes and prepare for the next contest.

Perhaps the biggest lesson is the importance of the team and the coach. Even in individual sports, great performers have coaches and support teams behind them. Golf has given me one particularly useful lesson: **stay focused on the ball and don't celebrate too early.** In business, as in golf, the outcome is not secure until the shot is complete. Every sport has lessons that can be translated into leadership, execution and business.

Having experienced leadership across several decades, what is one perspective you believe the next generation would benefit

from carrying forward—and what would you encourage them to define for themselves?

I am a strong believer in the principle of **win-win.** Whether it is a relationship between a boss and subordinate, a seller and buyer, two business partners or even relationships within a family, I believe sustainable relationships are created when both sides see value in the relationship. This becomes even more important as we enter an era where AI, automation, robotics and intelligent agents will fundamentally change the way work gets done. We do not yet know the full extent of that transformation.

What we do know is that technology can accelerate transactions, but **relationships take time, trust and investment to build.** I would therefore encourage the next generation to embrace technology without losing sight of the human element. Define success for yourself, but build it on relationships, trust, learning and mutual value.

Technology may change the way we work. Humans may increasingly work alongside machines and AI agents. But the organizations that remain truly resilient will continue to be **human-centric.** For me, that is perhaps the most important lesson of several decades of leadership: **technology can transform processes, but people create lasting organizations.**

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by CELERITY

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THE POWER OF PERSPECTIVE

A career gains depth when experience begins to change not only what you know, but how you see. For **Dr. Atul Kharate, Chief Operating Officer, Indian Oil Adani Ventures**, that perspective has been shaped by staying grounded, listening before deciding and remaining receptive to ideas that come from different generations, functions and experiences. His approach to leadership reflects the ability to look beyond the immediate—bringing clarity of purpose together with openness, giving people responsibility while knowing when to step in, and recognising that sustainable value is built through consistent choices over time. At its core is a belief that leadership becomes richer when it makes room for different viewpoints, continuous learning and a more considered understanding of what success truly means.



After a career of sustained achievement, what would you describe as your personal success mantra—and how has it evolved with experience?

My success mantra has always been simple: stay grounded, keep learning and remain consistent. Over the years, I have realised that success is rarely about one big achievement. It is about consistently delivering value, building trust and staying committed over the

long term. With experience, my focus has gradually shifted from seeking immediate recognition to creating sustainable value—for the organisation, for my colleagues and for the people I work with. I believe that is what creates a meaningful and lasting career.

Is there a book that has had a lasting influence on the way you think or lead?

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by

Stephen Covey has had a lasting influence on the way I think and lead. The principle “**Begin with the end in mind**” has particularly stayed with me. It reminds me that before deciding what to do, we should be clear about what we are trying to achieve. I try to apply this by first defining the objective and then aligning people, priorities and actions towards it. It has helped me remain focused, particularly when there are multiple competing priorities.

Which mentor or influence has had a lasting impact on you?

I have been fortunate to learn from several leaders and mentors at different stages of my career. Each of them has contributed something valuable to the way I think and work. One lesson that has stayed with me is: **‘Listen carefully before you decide’**.

I believe good leadership is not about having all the answers. It is about creating an environment where people feel comfortable sharing different perspectives, listening carefully to those views and then taking a considered decision. That approach has helped me understand that sometimes the best leadership comes not from speaking more, but from listening better.

How do you adapt your leadership to connect with younger professionals?

I don't believe leadership should be one-size-fits-all. Different generations bring different experiences, expectations and strengths. With younger professionals, I focus on clarity of expectations, freedom to execute and regular feedback. They bring tremendous energy, technological orientation and fresh perspectives, and I see that as a strength. My role is not to tell them exactly how everything should be done. It is to provide direction, give them responsibility, remove roadblocks and create an environment where they can learn. I believe people grow when you give them both responsibility and the space to make decisions, learn from mistakes and develop their own style.

What qualities will become increasingly important for the next generation of leaders—and which remain timeless?

I believe adaptability, resilience and collaboration will become increasingly important. The pace of change today means that leaders must be comfortable with uncertainty, continuously learn and be willing to rethink established ways of working. At the same time, some qualities will never become outdated—integrity, accountability, humility and respect for people. Technology and business models may change, but leadership ultimately remains about people, trust and the ability to take responsibility. Those

fundamentals will always matter.

What do you do personally to remain open to new ideas and perspectives?

I try to remain curious and, most importantly, listen to people at different levels and across different functions, rather than only to people who think like me. I make an effort to understand new technologies, emerging business models and changing expectations among customers and employees. I have also learnt that a good idea does not necessarily come from the most senior person in the room. Sometimes the best insight comes from someone much younger or from someone who is closest to the ground and sees the problem every day. For me, staying open to those perspectives is an important part of continuing to learn.

What do you look for beyond credentials when you recognise leadership potential?

Beyond credentials, I look for ownership. I notice people who don't wait to be told what needs to be done. They identify a problem, take responsibility and try to find a solution. I also look for integrity, curiosity, resilience and how a person responds when things don't go according to plan. Technical skills can be developed with experience and training, but attitude, ownership and integrity are much harder to teach. Those qualities, in my view, are strong indicators of leadership potential.

Has there been a leadership practice that has become instinctive over the years?

One principle that has become almost instinctive for me is: be accessible and lead from the front when the situation demands it. People should know that their leader is available when they need guidance or support. At the same time, being accessible doesn't mean becoming the bottleneck for every decision. I believe effective leadership is about finding the right balance between being available when needed and empowering people to make decisions independently. When a situation requires the leader to step forward, I believe you should do so. When the team is capable of leading, you should give them the space to do it.

What interests outside business continue to hold your attention?

I have a strong interest in academic research, and I also enjoy travelling, reading and interacting with people from different backgrounds and walks of life. These interests give me an opportunity to step outside my immediate professional environment and look at things from different perspectives. Research has taught me patience and curiosity; travel has taught me adaptability; and meeting different people has reinforced the importance of listening and understanding perspectives that may be very different from my own. I think these experiences ultimately make you a better professional because they keep you grounded, observant and open to learning.

What perspective would you like the next generation to carry forward, and what would you encourage them to define for themselves?

I would tell the next generation: don't be in a hurry to build a title; focus on building credibility. Learn your fundamentals, take ownership of your responsibilities, keep learning and, above all, treat people with respect. Titles and positions may change, but the credibility you build through your work and your relationships stays with you. At the same time, I would encourage young professionals not to simply inherit someone else's definition of success. Define success for yourself. But whatever that definition may be, build it on strong values, continuous learning and the courage to take responsibility. In the long run, I believe that combination creates both a successful and meaningful career.

THE CURIOSITY EDGE

In a business landscape where complexity rarely announces itself clearly, curiosity becomes a defining leadership advantage. It is the drive to question the obvious, look deeper into the data, and welcome perspectives that challenge established thinking. For **Deepak Thukral, Sr. Executive Officer, Supply Chain Maruti Suzuki India Ltd.**, curiosity is deeply tied to discipline—asking the right questions, unearthing the story behind the numbers, and translating insights into sharper decisions and stronger execution. By combining structured thinking with adaptability, his approach demonstrates that continuous operational excellence begins with a simple commitment: to Listen, Learn, and Ask how to do things better.



After a career of sustained achievement, what would you describe as your personal success mantra—and how has it evolved with experience?

My personal success mantra has always been simple: Early to Start is Early to Rise. I have always believed that the quality of our day is determined by how we begin it. Starting early, combined with disciplined

sleep habits, gives me more productive hours, a clearer mind, and the energy to continuously learn and improve.

Over the years, experience has taught me that success is rarely achieved through a single path. While it is important to have a clear Plan A, effective leaders must also be prepared with Plan B and Plan C. The ability to learn from past experiences, anticipate challenges, and change

gears when circumstances demand is what helps navigate uncertainty while remaining focused on the end goal. As responsibilities grow and the business environment evolves, my mantra has expanded beyond discipline to include adaptability and resilience.

Is there a book that has had a lasting influence on the way you think or lead? Is there a particular idea from it that you have consciously brought into your own life or leadership?

One book that has had a lasting influence on me is Ikigai. Its central idea of finding purpose by aligning passion, capability, contribution, and value resonates deeply with me. Equally inspiring are the teachings from our Hindu epics such as the Bhagavad Gita, which emphasize performing one's duty with sincerity, continuous self-improvement, and focusing on actions rather than being driven solely by outcomes.

Together, these philosophies have shaped my approach to leadership and life. Ikigai highlights the importance of finding meaning in what we do, while the Bhagavad Gita teaches resilience, discipline, and steadfastness in the face of challenges. I believe people perform at their best when they connect their individual contributions to a larger purpose, remain committed to learning, and embrace change with a positive mindset.

Mentors can shape a leader long after a particular chapter has ended. Which mentor or influence

has had a lasting impact on you, and what aspect of their thinking continues to stay with you?

I have been fortunate to learn from many remarkable leaders throughout my career, but one individual who has had a profound influence on me is R.C. Bhargava Sir. What makes his leadership truly inspiring is the bold vision he pursued at a time when owning a car in India was considered a luxury reserved for a few. The lesson that continues to stay with me is the power of a vision that serves a larger purpose. Great leaders do not just respond to current needs; they anticipate future possibilities and create opportunities that benefit generations.

R.C. Bhargava Sir's ability to combine a clear vision with execution, affordability, and customer focus is a reminder that true leadership is about creating lasting impact and driving meaningful change at scale.

You have led across generations with very different expectations of work, purpose and success. How do you adapt your leadership to connect with younger professionals while allowing them the space to bring their own strengths and perspectives?

Having young minds in the team brings fresh energy, new perspectives, and it's quite interesting to see their way of approach towards challenges. I genuinely enjoy interacting with young professionals because with every conversation I learn something new. What stands out about this generation

is their natural comfort with technology and their ability to adopt new tools and solutions seamlessly. They are far more quick in exploring new technologies and finding innovative ways to complete their work. Watching how effortlessly they integrate these advancements into their work is both impressive and inspiring.

I believe leadership is a two-way learning process, my role is not to tell them exactly how things should be done, but to provide direction, create opportunities, and give them the space to experiment and grow. The key is to build an environment based on trust and openness, where ideas can flow freely. When experience and fresh perspectives come together, teams become stronger and better prepared for the future.

As a new generation of leaders enters positions of greater responsibility, what qualities do you believe will become increasingly important—and which qualities remain timeless?

If there is one quality I would encourage every professional to develop, it is the habit of asking questions. Whenever in doubt, ASK. Continuous learning begins with curiosity, and every meaningful improvement starts by seeking a deeper understanding of the issue at hand. Looking back on my own journey, many of my most valuable learnings came from asking the right questions. Going beyond the obvious to understand root causes often reveal better solutions and new opportunities for growth.

As a new generation of leaders takes

on greater responsibility, the ability to combine curiosity with technology will become increasingly important. While curiosity remains a timeless quality, young professionals today have the advantage of leveraging AI and digital tools to explore issues more deeply, learn faster, and make better-informed decisions. The right questions, supported by new ways of working, can become powerful drivers of innovation, continuous improvement, and long-term success.

The business environment continues to change at remarkable speed. What do you do personally to remain open to new ideas, new ways of working and perspectives that may be very different from your own?

In a business environment that is constantly evolving, I always try to actively listen and seek feedback from my peers. I try to make conscious effort to pay attention while interacting with colleagues across different generations. Every generation brings its own strengths, whether it is experience, technological expertise, or a fresh way of looking at challenges. By listening with an open mind, I often discover new approaches that I may not have considered otherwise.

I also see feedback as an essential tool for continuous improvement. It helps us challenge our assumptions and improve the way we work. The moment we believe we have nothing left to improve is the moment we stop growing. Active listening, curiosity, and openness

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to feedback have helped me remain adaptable throughout my journey, and I believe they will continue to be critical qualities for future leaders as well.

Having worked with people across different generations and personalities, what do you look for beyond credentials when you recognise someone with the potential to lead?

What stands out most is for me in an individual is his/her dedication and the inner motivation to go beyond conventional standards and that gets reflected in their work. Skills can be learned, experience can be gained, and leadership capabilities can be developed over time, but genuine commitment to one's work comes from within.

I believe that people who truly enjoy what they do are naturally driven to learn more, take ownership, and continuously raise the bar for themselves. They do not settle for 'good enough'. Instead, they are always looking for ways to improve. 'How can I make it even better', that's a great attitude to have.

For me, the strongest indicator of future leadership is the ones who have genuine enthusiasm for their work and a willingness to push beyond perceived limits. When that inner drive is present, all other leadership qualities can be nurtured and refined over time.

Over the years, has there been a leadership practice or principle that has become so integral to the way you work that it now comes almost instinctively?

Over the years, one principle that has

become a nature to me is being organized and systematic in everything I do. A philosophy that has greatly influenced my approach is 5S, the Japanese methodology centred on workplace organization and discipline. What began as a workplace practice gradually became a way of thinking.

Equally important is the ability to understand the story behind the data. I strongly believe that leaders must grasp the key numbers, analyse trends, and draw meaningful conclusions before making decisions. Data provides direction, while a systematic approach ensures effective execution. With experience, I have realized that leadership is often about simplifying complexity. Combining structured thinking with data-driven decision-making helps minimize uncertainty, improve outcomes, and build confidence across teams. This simple habit, practiced consistently over time, has helped me drive better execution, stronger teamwork, and sustainable results

What interests outside business continue to hold your attention, and have any of them influenced the way you approach your professional life?

One interest outside of business that continues to hold my attention is Cricket. Beyond being a sport, it has shaped many of my perspectives on leadership and teamwork. Cricket teaches the importance of strategy, adaptability, and collective effort. Every match presents different conditions and challenges, requiring teams to assess situations quickly, adjust their approach, and stay

focused on the ultimate objective. It also reinforces the value of trust, where individual excellence contributes to, but never outweighs, team success.

Having experienced leadership across several decades, what is one perspective you believe the next generation would benefit from carrying forward—and what would you encourage them to define for themselves?

If there is one perspective I would encourage the next generation to carry forward, it is the ability to accept constructive criticism with an open mind. I understand that, coming from someone in a leadership position, it may sound easier said than done. However, there was a time when I too was new to the industry, learning the ropes and finding my way. Looking back, some of my biggest lessons came from feedback and criticism. At times, it was not always easy to hear, but I chose to view it as an opportunity to learn rather than a setback.

Constructive criticism, when received with the right mindset, becomes a powerful tool for growth. It accelerates learning, builds resilience, and helps us see perspectives that we might otherwise overlook. At the same time, I would encourage the next generation to define success for themselves. Every individual has a unique journey, ambition, and purpose. The combination of humility to learn and confidence to chart your own path is what ultimately shapes impactful leaders.

STAY CURIOUS, STAY GROUNDED

In a fast-evolving business landscape, experience provides crucial context—but true impact requires a willingness to listen, unlearn, and stay open to fresh perspectives. **Dr. Sachin Ghosalkar, Senior Vice President – SCM & Operations, Alembic Pharmaceuticals Ltd.,** believes that leadership is a responsibility earned through integrity and trust rather than authority. In this insightful conversation, Dr. Ghosalkar reflects on the core principles that guide his decision-making, the enduring power of active listening, and how emerging leaders can define their own meaningful path to success.



After a career of sustained achievement, what would you describe as your personal success mantra and how has it evolved with experience?

My success mantra has always been quite simple: stay curious, stay consistent, and stay grounded. Earlier in my career, I probably associated success more closely with achievement, setting ambitious targets, taking on challenging assignments and delivering results. Those things remain important, but experience has changed the way I look at success. Over time, I have come to believe that a career is not defined by a few big milestones. It is built through the choices

you make every day, how you treat people, how you respond when things don't go as planned, and whether you continue to learn even after you become experienced.

I have also learned to look at setbacks differently. They are frustrating at the time, but they often teach you things that success doesn't. They make you reassess your assumptions and sometimes open doors you hadn't considered. Today, I would define success as continuing to grow, doing work that creates value, developing people around me, and being able to look back at the journey with a sense of integrity and satisfaction.

Is there a book that has had a

lasting influence on the way you think or lead? Is there a particular idea from it that you have consciously brought into your own life or leadership?

A book that has stayed with me over the years is *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. What I took from it was the idea that circumstances may not always be within our control, but our response to those circumstances is. That is a particularly powerful lesson in leadership because uncertainty, setbacks and situations you cannot control are inevitable. I have tried to apply that thinking throughout my career. When something doesn't go according to plan,

I try to spend less time asking why it happened and more time asking, "What can we do from here?"

I also think the book reinforces the importance of purpose. People are willing to work through difficult situations when they understand why the work matters and what they are contributing to. For me, leadership is not only about delivering results. It is also about giving people a sense of purpose and perspective, particularly when the path ahead is uncertain.

Mentors can shape a leader long after a particular chapter has ended. Which mentor or influence has had a lasting impact on you, and what aspect of their thinking continues to stay with you?

One of the most important lessons I received from a mentor was that leadership is ultimately about the people you develop, not the position you hold. What I particularly admired was the way this person listened. They didn't feel the need to have the first answer in every conversation. They would ask questions, understand the situation and then allow the person in front of them to arrive at the answer wherever possible. That has stayed with me.

As you become more senior, it can be tempting to solve everything yourself because you have the experience to do so. But if you are constantly providing the answers, you may be solving today's problem without developing the person who will face tomorrow's. I have therefore tried to give people responsibility, allow them to make decisions, and give them the space to learn, even when their approach may be different from mine.

The best mentors, I believe, don't simply give you advice. They influence the way you think. That is the part of mentorship I have tried to carry forward.

You have led across generations with very different expectations of work, purpose and success. How do you adapt your leadership to connect with younger professionals while allowing them the space to bring their own strengths and perspectives?

I don't think leadership across generations is about finding a different leadership

style for every age group. It is about understanding the individual. Younger professionals today may have different expectations around career growth, flexibility, technology and purpose. I don't see those differences as a problem. In fact, they can be very useful because they force established leaders to question some of their own assumptions.

My approach is to be very clear about what needs to be achieved and why, while giving people flexibility in how they achieve it. I also believe younger colleagues should be able to question established ways of doing things. Experience gives you context, but it does not mean that every way of working from the past remains the right way of working today.

As a leader, I want people to feel comfortable saying, "I think there is a better way of doing this." Of course, that comes with accountability. You have to be willing to stand behind your ideas and deliver results. Ultimately, I don't want people to become leaders who simply imitate me. I want them to develop their own style, based on their strengths and their understanding of the situation.

As a new generation of leaders enters positions of greater responsibility, what qualities do you believe will become increasingly important and which qualities remain timeless?

The ability to adapt will become increasingly important. The pace at which technology, markets and organisations are changing means that leaders cannot depend entirely on what worked in the past. They have to be willing to learn, unlearn and sometimes change their minds. I also think leaders will increasingly need the ability to bring together people with very different expertise and perspectives. No leader can be an expert in everything, so knowing how to ask the right questions and bring the right people together becomes extremely important. But there are certain qualities that I don't think will ever change: integrity, empathy, accountability, humility and courage.

Technology may change the way we work, but people still want to work with leaders they can trust. They want leaders

who take responsibility when things go wrong, give credit when things go right, and are willing to make difficult decisions when required. If there is one thing I would emphasise, it is that leadership is not about having all the answers. As you become more senior, it becomes increasingly important to know which questions to ask and whom to ask them of.

The business environment continues to change at remarkable speed. What do you do personally to remain open to new ideas, new ways of working and perspectives that may be very different from your own?

I try to remind myself that experience is useful, but it can also create assumptions. When you have been in an industry for many years, you develop patterns of thinking based on what you have seen before. Those patterns are valuable, but they can also make you dismiss something simply because it is unfamiliar. I therefore try to stay curious. I read, speak to people across different functions and generations, and make an effort to understand what is changing outside my immediate area of work.

I particularly enjoy conversations with younger colleagues because they often approach familiar problems very differently. They may question something that everyone else has simply accepted as "the way things are done."

I also believe in experimentation. You don't necessarily have to make a major commitment to every new idea. Sometimes it is better to test something on a small scale, learn from it and then decide whether it deserves a larger investment. For me, staying open to new ideas doesn't mean accepting every new idea. It means being willing to listen properly before deciding.

Having worked with people across different generations and personalities, what do you look for beyond credentials when you recognise someone with the potential to lead?

Credentials tell you what someone has achieved. They don't necessarily tell you how that person will behave when things become difficult. Beyond qualifications

As a leader, I want people to feel comfortable saying, “I think there is a better way of doing this.” Of course, that comes with accountability. You have to be willing to stand behind your ideas and deliver results. Ultimately, I don’t want people to become leaders who simply imitate me. I want them to develop their own style, based on their strengths and their understanding of the situation.

and experience, I look for curiosity, ownership and character. I pay attention to how someone responds when they make a mistake. Do they try to explain it away, or do they take responsibility and learn from it? I also look at how they treat people who cannot offer them anything in return.

Another important quality is curiosity. People with leadership potential usually want to understand the bigger picture. They ask questions, they don’t pretend to know everything, and they are comfortable learning from people who may have less experience than them.

I also look for people who make those around them better. If someone is willing to share knowledge, develop colleagues, give credit to others and bring people together, that tells me a great deal about their leadership potential.

A leadership title can be given to someone. Leadership itself has to be earned.

Over the years, has there been a leadership practice or principle that has become so integral to the way you work that it now comes almost instinctively?

If there is one practice that has become almost instinctive for me, it is listening before responding. Earlier in my career, I was probably more focused on having the answer quickly. With experience, I have realised that the first answer is not always the best answer, and sometimes the person closest to the problem knows more about it than the person sitting at the top of the organisation. So I try to understand the situation before forming a view. I ask questions, listen to different perspectives and try to separate the facts from assumptions.

I also want people to be comfortable telling me when something is not working. If people only tell a senior leader what they think the leader wants to hear, the organisation eventually becomes disconnected from reality. Creating that openness doesn’t mean there is no accountability. Quite the opposite. People should be able to disagree openly, but once a decision is made, everyone should be committed to executing it. Over the years, I have found that good listening often leads to better decisions and, just as importantly, stronger teams.

What interests outside business continue to hold your attention, and have any of them influenced the way you approach your professional life?

Outside work, I enjoy reading, travelling and, perhaps most importantly, spending time with people and having conversations that have nothing to do with business. Travel has probably influenced me more than I initially realised. It reminds you that your own way of doing things is not necessarily the only way. You encounter different cultures, different priorities and completely different ways of looking at everyday problems. Reading has a similar effect. It gives you the opportunity to step outside your immediate environment and see situations through someone else’s experience.

I also value conversations with people from different backgrounds and generations. Some of the most interesting ideas don’t necessarily come from formal meetings or business discussions. I think those interests have helped me professionally by keeping me curious and reminding me that there is always more than one way of looking at a

problem. And perhaps most importantly, having interests outside work gives you perspective. At the end of the day, a person’s identity is much bigger than their designation.

Having experienced leadership across several decades, what is one perspective you believe the next generation would benefit from carrying forward and what would you encourage them to define for themselves?

One thing I would encourage the next generation to carry forward is the understanding that leadership is a responsibility, not simply a position. A designation gives you authority, but what you do with that authority determines the kind of leader you become.

Trust takes years to build and can be lost very quickly. So I would encourage young leaders to protect their credibility, keep their commitments and treat people with respect, particularly when there is pressure to do otherwise. At the same time, I would encourage them not to simply inherit someone else’s definition of success.

Everyone’s journey is different. For some, success may mean building a large business. For someone else, it may mean becoming an expert in their field, building strong teams, creating something new, or maintaining a fulfilling life alongside a successful career. And that definition can change with time. What motivates you at 30 may not be what motivates you at 50.

So my advice would be: **Carry forward the values that have stood the test of time, but have the courage to define your own destination.**

THE ARCHITECTURE OF LASTING LEADERSHIP

Some leadership lessons reveal themselves only with time—through difficult assignments, trusted mentors, changing circumstances and the people who shape a career along the way. The inspiring journey of **PV Sheshadri, Executive Vice President, Reliance Retail**, reflects that accumulation of experience, with each chapter adding to a leadership philosophy grounded in trust, accountability and the belief that people grow when they are given both responsibility and room to lead. From staying close to the work to knowing when to step back, his perspective is ultimately about creating capable teams and an environment where accountability can thrive—giving people the confidence to take ownership and the space to carry that responsibility forward.



After a career of sustained achievement, what would you describe as your personal success mantra—and how has it evolved with experience?

I have always believed in maintaining positivity, blindly trusting my mentors and leaders. A highly supportive family makes a substantial difference, and in my case, it came at the cost of many sacrifices

my family had to make. I did not pick my assignments, instead, I blindly followed whatever was assigned to me and tried to learn and contribute to every assignment that came my way. I was also fortunate to have highly supportive colleagues and co-workers who believed in me and in my way of working. I always believed in a collaborative approach rather than a 'My Way or The Highway' attitude.

Getting your hands dirty is the best way to earn trust among your co-workers and staff, alongside effective delegation. I believe in being straightforward in my communication. At the same time, I believe strongly in using resources responsibly and conducting business in an ethical and conscientious manner.

There is an old saying: 'Well begun is half done'. For me, however, the other

I believe the fundamentals of leadership remain the same, but the way we connect with people must evolve with the times. Younger professionals today come with a strong desire to learn, contribute, and see meaningful progress in their careers. They are also more willing to question established ways of working, experiment with technology and AI, and ask why something is being done in a particular way. I see that as a positive. As leaders, we should not expect the next generation to think exactly the way we did.

half is about consistently showing up and doing the work, particularly when circumstances are difficult. There will always be challenging situations, but I have learned that our response to those situations often defines us more than the situations themselves.

Over the years, my understanding of success has also changed. Early in my career, I naturally placed greater emphasis on execution, performance, and achieving results. With experience, I have come to appreciate that sustainable success is much broader. It is about building capable teams, developing people, and giving them the opportunity to grow in areas where they have the potential to excel. One of the lessons I have learned is that a leader does not necessarily have to have all the answers. Sometimes, the most valuable thing we can do is recognise potential in others, give them the right direction, and create the space for them to become better. I believe in being honest with people, especially when the message is difficult.

Is there a book that has had a lasting influence on the way you think or lead? Is there a particular idea from it that you have consciously brought into your own life or leadership?

Honestly, I am not a great reader. I am a patient listener and observer. Most of my learnings have come from listening to people and being hands-on. However, if I were to say that books had no influence in my life, I would be wrong. Coming from a hard-core operations background, I have always been drawn to books that

deal with real challenges, though there are very few that I have actually read.

One book had a great influence on my life: *"The Goal"*, gifted to me by one of my mentors. It is a management-oriented novel by Eliyahu Goldratt, a business consultant famous for his Theory of Constraints. *The Goal* is a study of operations management, focusing on the theory of constraints and bottlenecks. The characters Alex and Jonah have had a long-lasting impression on my career journey — their combination of skills in identifying bottlenecks and resolving them, whether in professional or personal life, was compelling. Though the methods may seem archaic compared to today's AI-era problem-solving approaches, the fundamentals still hold good.

Over the years, I have increasingly realised that leadership is not about having all the answers or personally controlling every decision. It is about creating clarity, building trust, and giving people the ownership to deliver. When a person understands the larger purpose of what they are doing, they are more likely to take genuine accountability for the outcome.

I personally believe that ownership and accountability, when supported by trust, save a great deal of time and energy. A leader cannot and should not try to be involved in every detail. If you have chosen the right people, you need to trust them and give them the space to perform.

Mentors can shape a leader long after a particular chapter has ended. Which mentor or influence has had a lasting impact on you,

and what aspect of their thinking continues to stay with you?

When I look back, I would not say that my journey has been shaped by one particular mentor. It has been shaped by many people, experiences, and circumstances across different stages of my life from my childhood and college years to the different phases of my professional journey. Each phase brought different people and different lessons. Some taught me through their guidance, some through their expectations, and sometimes even through situations that were difficult or uncomfortable. Looking back, I can still see their great influence on me even today.

If I divide my career into three most important phases: 1) Birth, 2) Shaping and Nurturing, and 3) Maturity — there were three important people who played a significant role in my life. When I entered the industry as an intern, knowing nothing and simply needing a job to support a large family of eight people, the only goal I had in mind was to stick around and do everything assigned to me efficiently. I was an obedient follower who knew nothing about the industry. The only lesson I learned in this phase was to never say no to any assignment, to stay hungry, keep learning, and create a positive impression. This was my Phase 1.

During Phase 2, which was a short stint but an impactful one, I started working with a mentor who was a thorough professional and a highly sincere person. Though I was the most junior person in the department, I had the privilege of reporting to the most senior person in it.

I never planned for it to be this way, but it happened, and I consider it a blessing in disguise. This mentor was instrumental in introducing me to processes, people management, quality, and devotion all while being sincere in everything he did. Communication skills and international trade were the best things one could hope to learn from him. He was instrumental in nurturing and shaping me.

The third phase demanded a high level of maturity and conduct. It was the longest phase. This mentor was not only like extended family and a close friend, but also my longest-serving boss over a prolonged period of my career. He pushed me into extreme challenges, extracting my maximum potential. While guiding me through every step of this phase, he ensured he had my back and that I was taken care of. His management and entrepreneurial skills made me stand out in the competition and eventually enabled me to lead an organisation that he had created. This phase left a long-lasting impression, and from there, I never looked back. I owe him this success.

Looking back, having spent over three decades in the industry, the journey has not been a cakewalk. It was a tough one that came with substantial sacrifices. I realise that all of these experiences pushed me to become more self-driven, to set my own goals, and, importantly, to find satisfaction in doing something meaningful and productive at the end of the day.

One thing I have consistently admired in the people who influenced me is the ability to maintain high standards without losing respect for people. That has shaped my own belief that leadership is not about having all the answers or being the smartest person in the room. It is about having the confidence to listen, learn from others, and bring together people who may know more than you in certain areas. I still look at youngsters who are half my age with an expectation of learning something from them that I may have missed. I am a firm believer in the concept of "Reverse Mentorship" and am still looking for someone to take on that role and help me see something beyond myself. Someday, I may find one.

You have led across generations

with very different expectations of work, purpose and success. How do you adapt your leadership to connect with younger professionals while allowing them the space to bring their own strengths and perspectives?

I believe the fundamentals of leadership remain the same, but the way we connect with people must evolve with the times. Younger professionals today come with a strong desire to learn, contribute, and see meaningful progress in their careers. They are also more willing to question established ways of working, experiment with technology and AI, and ask why something is being done in a particular way. I see that as a positive. As leaders, we should not expect the next generation to think exactly the way we did.

At the same time, I believe young professionals look to their leaders for more than direction. They want to see what is possible, learn from the way their leaders work, and feel that their contribution can lead to meaningful growth over time. That places a responsibility on leaders to lead by example not only through what we say, but through the quality of work, the decisions we make, and the standards we set every day.

My approach is to give people clarity on the outcome we are trying to achieve, while giving them the freedom to find their own way of getting there. I encourage them to question, challenge assumptions, experiment, and put forward their ideas with confidence. I often tell young professionals not to be afraid of making mistakes or of asking difficult questions. What matters is that they learn, take ownership, and have the courage to try.

However, freedom has to come with accountability. Empowerment does not mean lowering standards; it means giving people the opportunity to take responsibility for those standards. All of this demand patience and perseverance. Please do not fall short on these. This is my small piece of advice to the present generation.

As a new generation of leaders enters positions of greater responsibility, what qualities do you believe will become increasingly important—and

which qualities remain timeless?

I believe the ability to learn, unlearn, and most importantly apply what you learn will become increasingly important. The business environment is changing quickly: technology, consumer behaviour, decision-making approaches, and business models are all evolving. Leaders therefore cannot depend only on what worked in the past or what worked in a particular competitive environment. The willingness to question one's own assumptions and adapt is becoming essential. Leadership today is less about having all the answers and more about bringing together different perspectives, making informed decisions, and helping people perform at their best.

At the same time, some qualities will never become outdated. Integrity, humility, accountability, resilience, and respect for people irrespective of their position or role will always matter. Technology can change the way we work, but it cannot replace trust. Being honest, transparent, and upfront with people, particularly during difficult situations, is what builds credibility over time.

The business environment continues to change at remarkable speed. What do you do personally to remain open to new ideas, new ways of working and perspectives that may be very different from your own?

I believe one should remain a student throughout their career, but learning should also be shared. Whatever I have gained through my professional experience, I have always tried to pass on to others whenever I felt it could help them. I believe leadership is not only about acquiring knowledge, but also about creating the next generation of people who can carry that knowledge forward and improve upon it.

I also make it a point to listen first, particularly to people who have different experiences and perspectives from my own. Younger colleagues often bring a fresh way of looking at technology, processes, and emerging business models. Instead of assuming that experience always means knowing better, I believe it is important to understand what is changing and why.

At the same time, I travel a lot and

strongly believe in staying connected to the ground. Data, reports, and presentations tell us what is happening, but conversations with the people who are actually doing the work often help us understand why it is happening. That understanding is essential for making practical decisions. I also try not to become attached to a particular way of working simply because it has worked in the past. Experience should improve our judgement but should not be a constraint.

Having worked with people across different generations and personalities, what do you look for beyond credentials when you recognise someone with the potential to lead?

For me, attitude matters a lot more than aptitude. Cultural alignment is a must, and staying grounded with a nimble approach is what makes a candidate truly deserving of the title of “Leader”. Credentials are important, but they tell only one part of the story. Beyond qualifications and experience, I look for people who demonstrate curiosity, ownership, the ability to work with others, and most importantly a consistent ability to create meaningful impact for the business.

I look for people who are willing to take responsibility, especially when no one is watching or when the outcome is not as expected. When things go wrong, I value people who focus on finding solutions rather than finding someone to blame. Similarly, when things go well, the ability to recognise and give credit to the team is an important quality. The team is the hero here.

Over the years, has there been a leadership practice or principle that has become so integral to the way you work that it now comes almost instinctively?

One principle I have come to believe strongly in is to focus on the problem, not the person. In any organisation, things will go wrong. The important thing is how we respond when they do. My first instinct is to understand what happened, why it happened, and what we can do differently to prevent it from happening again rather than immediately looking for someone to blame.

I have also learned that good leadership requires asking questions and listening carefully before forming an opinion. As we gain experience, there can be a tendency to assume that we already know the answer. But every situation is different, and the people closest to the problem often have insights that may not be visible from a distance. Ultimately, **I believe people perform at their best when they know they can speak openly, acknowledge mistakes, and raise difficult issues without fear.** Creating that kind of environment is one of the most important responsibilities of a leader.

What interests outside business continue to hold your attention, and have any of them influenced the way you approach your professional life?

I am a fitness enthusiast something that has been embedded in me since childhood. I am also a qualified mountaineer with both Basic and Advanced mountaineering certifications from a reputed institute in Darjeeling. I have led many expeditions to the Himalayas during my younger days, and it is there that my leadership skills first began to evolve. Both fitness and mountaineering require discipline, consistency, and a willingness to push yourself beyond your comfort zone.

I also love photography and filmmaking. I have learned video editing watching YouTube. I love to travel and experience different cultures around the world. I am a reasonably good cook, love good food, and enjoy exploring it wherever I go. On weekends, I love to spend time on a hill or in the kitchen. Mountaineering and hiking, in particular, give me a different perspective. They teach you to be comfortable with uncertainty, to keep moving when the journey becomes difficult, and to focus on the destination without losing sight of the terrain in front of you.

Having experienced leadership across several decades, what is one perspective you believe the next generation would benefit from carrying forward—and what would you encourage them to define for themselves?

I would encourage the next generation to

stay grounded in a few simple principles that remain relevant regardless of how much the workplace or technology changes: integrity, hard work, continuous learning, meaningful relationships, and respect for knowledge, people, and resources.

I would also tell young professionals to believe in themselves without becoming overconfident, and to remain resilient even when things do not go according to plan. Careers rarely move in a straight line. There will be failures, changes in direction, and moments of self-doubt. What matters is the ability to learn from those experiences, adapt, and keep moving forward. I would also encourage the younger generation to take care of their mental and physical well-being. Career growth is important, but so is having the energy and mindset to enjoy the journey of life. Find time for hobbies, exercise, family, or anything that helps you manage stress, recharge, and feel good about yourself. A healthy mind and body are essential for sustainable success.

I would also encourage the next generation not to measure success only through titles, compensation, or how quickly they reach the next position. Those things are important, but success should ultimately be defined by each individual. For one person, it may be professional achievement; for another, it may be creating something meaningful, having time for family, building a strong team, or making a positive difference. Maintain your values, take care of your relationships, and keep learning. Career growth takes time, and credibility is earned through consistent actions rather than quick achievements.

The Anatomy of a **Lasting Legacy**

A distinguished career is rarely the product of a single breakthrough. It is forged across years of high-stakes decisions, complex transitions, and heavy responsibilities that compound into a distinct professional identity. While recognition marks a key milestone, the true value lies in the expansive journey being written behind it.

The Supply Chain Laureates turns the spotlight on leaders whose sustained contributions, strategic agility, and proven impact mark them as the vanguard of their fields. Going beneath the surface of traditional headlines, these conversations explore the defining moments in progress: the choices that opened new directions, the crucible assignments that demanded a different response, and the evolving philosophies that shape executive excellence.

These narratives illuminate the true architecture of leadership in motion—revealing not just where the journey has led so far, but the intellect, strategic pivots, and defining choices that build a lasting legacy piece by piece.

LEADING WHERE THE PATH IS NEW

Some leadership journeys are defined by navigating a path that is already known. Others take shape when the path itself is still being created. At SDHI, **Ashish Tripathi, Assistant Vice President – SCM & Procurement, SWAN Defence & Heavy Industries (SDHI)**, is part of a chapter that demands both—building new capabilities while navigating complexity, change and challenges without an established playbook. His approach reflects a strong belief in preparation, persistence and the value of continually stepping beyond the familiar.



What is the ambition that currently excites you most, and what makes this particular chapter of your journey significant to you?

What excites me the most at the moment is being part of SDHI at a time when we are building vessels that are being built in India for the first time. That brings a completely different set of challenges because there isn't always an established playbook to follow. Every day brings something new, and that makes the journey particularly exciting. At the same time, we are evolving as a shipyard building our capabilities, processes and ecosystem to compete with our global peers. For me, being part of that transformation and helping build those capabilities from the ground up is what makes this chapter of my career particularly significant.

Is there a book, idea or philosophy that has influenced the way you approach life or leadership, and how has it found expression in the way you live or work?

'The Theory of Constraints' by Eliyahu Goldratt has influenced the way I look at problems. It taught me to look beyond

individual issues and identify the constraint that is actually limiting the overall system. In a complex environment like shipbuilding, that way of thinking is particularly relevant because solving one problem does not necessarily improve the entire system if the real constraint lies elsewhere. Another thought that has stayed with me comes from Professor Boman Moradian at SP Jain, "What gets measured gets analysed, and what gets analysed gets acted upon." It reflects the way I like to work bringing visibility through data and then using that visibility to drive action.

Another book I have really enjoyed is 'Elephants and Cheetahs: The Beauty of Operations' by Prof. Saral Mukherjee of IIM Ahmedabad. I particularly enjoyed exploring these ideas during his lecture. Prof. Mukherjee brilliantly explores the balance between agility and stability in organisations, using elephants and cheetahs as powerful metaphors. What stood out to me is the beauty of understanding how different parts of an operation connect, interact, and ultimately influence the overall outcome.

When faced with a significant

decision, what tends to guide you most strongly—experience, instinct, data, discussion or something else?

Usually, it is a combination. I start with facts and data, use my experience to understand what may not be visible in the numbers, and then discuss the decision with people who bring a different perspective. Instinct also has a role, particularly when information is incomplete, but I prefer instinct to be informed by experience rather than driven by emotion.

What is a personal discipline that has had an outsized influence on your effectiveness, particularly as the demands on your time and attention have grown?

Preparation. I have found that the more senior you become, the less time you have to react and the more important it becomes to anticipate. I try to understand the issue before entering a discussion, know the numbers, identify the likely questions and be clear about what outcome I am looking for. It saves time and also gives people confidence that decisions are being made with thought behind them.

Once I take ownership of something, I tend to stay with it until there is an outcome. But one principle I strongly believe in is that it is never about the person, it is about the problem. You can challenge an issue very firmly without making it personal. I look at it much like sport you keep your eyes on the ball. The objective is to solve the problem and achieve the outcome, rather than get distracted by who is involved or where the disagreement came from.

Whose counsel do you value when you want to look at a situation from a perspective different from your own?

I have been fortunate that the management at SDHI has been very supportive in this regard. The counsel is not limited to simply being demanding about the outcome; there is also a willingness to provide context and insights that come from experience across industries and businesses. That broader perspective is extremely valuable. Sometimes the answer to a shipping or shipbuilding challenge may not necessarily come from shipping itself. Looking at how another industry has solved a similar problem can open up a completely different way of thinking.

What is an interest outside your professional world that has remained a meaningful source of curiosity or enjoyment for you?

I enjoy playing sport particularly cricket, tennis and, more recently, pickleball. I make it a point to play with friends at least twice a week. Apart from the enjoyment, I think sport is a great way to switch off while still keeping yourself competitive and engaged. I also have a strong interest in the automobile industry. I enjoy following new launches, particularly the technology behind them the engines, drivetrain, features and the engineering that goes into the product. What is particularly interesting today is how Indian automotive brands are increasingly giving established European and Japanese manufacturers a run for their money, not just on price but increasingly on product quality, technology and features.

What aspect of your personality tends to have the greatest influence on the way you work with people?

I would say Persistence. Once I take ownership of something, I tend to stay with it until there is an outcome. But one principle I strongly believe in is that it is never about the person, it is about the problem. You can challenge an issue very firmly without making it personal. I look at it much like sport you keep your eyes on the ball. The objective is to solve the problem and achieve the outcome, rather than get distracted by who is involved or where the disagreement came from.

What is something you have become more selective about as your career has progressed—whether it is the opportunities you pursue, the commitments you make or the way you spend your time?

Interestingly, my career has involved some fairly radical changes decisions that may have been questioned at the time. Moving from sea to shore, moving from Singapore back to India, and then making my current move are all examples. My thinking has always been that comfort is good, but too much comfort can limit learning and growth. I would rather take on a new challenge where I have to learn again than remain in a comfortable environment simply because it is familiar.

That has probably become my personal mantra: if you are no longer learning, you should question whether you are still growing.

When you look beyond your current role and the milestones

ahead, what is the kind of life and leadership journey you would like to be creating for yourself?

For me, leadership ultimately comes down to people. If you take care of your people, give them ownership and create the right environment, they will make sure that the work they are responsible for is worth doing. But I also believe that support has to come with responsibility. People need to be accountable for the outcomes they own. The other part that matters to me is seeing people progress. Ideally, I would like to see the people I work with grow into bigger roles within the organisation. And if the right opportunity is not available internally, I would still consider it a success if someone moves outside into a significantly larger role because of the experience and confidence they gained while working with us.

For me, that is one of the most meaningful measures of leadership not just what you accomplish yourself, but what you enable other people to accomplish.

BUILT FOR THE NEXT ASCENT

Progress rarely comes from standing still. It is shaped by the willingness to question what has worked, remain open to what can be learned and keep raising the bar when the next challenge appears. For **Manoj Kumar, Chief Supply Chain Officer, Amber Enterprises India**, that philosophy has translated into a career defined by continuous evolution—and today, into an ambition to help build a supply chain capable of matching the scale and complexity of India's next manufacturing chapter. At Amber Group, he is focused not simply on efficiency, but on creating capabilities that are more resilient, more self-sufficient and better prepared for what lies ahead.



You are stepping into the CSCO role at Amber Group at a pivotal moment for Indian manufacturing. What excites you most about this chapter?

What excites me most right now is the sheer scale of what we are building at Amber Group: not simply a supply chain, but a self-sufficient manufacturing ecosystem, at the precise moment India is ready to lead that charge. We have recently received ECMS approval for large-scale PCB manufacturing under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative, and to be part of that, architecting the sourcing strategy, the supplier ecosystem, the commodity intelligence layer, feels genuinely historic.

This chapter is different in kind, not just scale. At Amber, we span consumer durables, EMS, PCBs, and railway subsystems: extraordinary complexity under one roof, deeply backward-integrated, with each vertical at a different stage of maturity. The ambition is to build a supply chain that is not merely efficient today but resilient enough to carry the next decade of Indian

manufacturing growth. That is the kind of chapter you remember.

Which books have most shaped your thinking as a supply chain leader?

No single book has shaped me, but five I carry from different stages of a career, each asking a different question.

'The Goal' by Eliyahu Goldratt rewired how I think about operations early on. The Theory of Constraints: that every system has one binding constraint and that optimising anything else is largely irrelevant. It is a question I still ask first: where is the actual bottleneck? It has saved me from a great deal of sophisticated work on the wrong variable.

'Everything is Negotiable' by Gavin Kennedy built my sourcing foundations. Its central insight: that the most dangerous moment in a negotiation is when you assume the other party's position is fixed, shaped my entire approach to supplier relationships.

'Maverick' by Ricardo Semler genuinely unsettled me. The radical trust Semler extended to his people

challenged assumptions I had absorbed unconsciously about how organisations must function. I have carried threads of that philosophy into how I structure accountability within my own teams.

'What Got You Here Won't Get You There' by Marshall Goldsmith arrived at exactly the right moment, mid-career, when I was moving from strong individual contributor to leading large organisations. Goldsmith's argument that the habits driving early success can become the very ceiling of later leadership was uncomfortable and necessary in equal measure.

And Apple in China, which is, at its core, a study of what a truly optimised supply chain ecosystem looks like when built with sustained commitment and discipline over decades. For those of us helping construct India's manufacturing future, it reads as both inspiration and instruction.

"Every system has one binding constraint, and optimising anything else is largely irrelevant. I still ask first: where is the actual bottleneck?"

How do you approach complex sourcing decisions? Is it more instinct, data, or something else entirely?

Structured experience filtered through data, then tested in conversation. Experience alone makes you pattern-match too quickly. Data alone drives precision on the wrong question. Neither is sufficient on its own.

What works is a sequence: get the data early, test it against what you know, then open it to the room. My sourcing head sees something my operations head does not, and vice versa. The decision that comes out of that conversation is almost always better than the one I would have reached alone. Instinct I treat as a signal to probe, not a conclusion. If something feels wrong despite the data, that question almost always surfaces what the data was not capturing.

Having worked across quality, production, marketing, and logistics before arriving in supply chain also shapes this. When manufacturing pushes back on a sourcing call, I have a genuine sense of what they are seeing. You cannot solve for your internal customer if you have never tried to stand in their position.

You are known as a runner and trekker. How does that discipline translate into how you lead?

Staying physically active and deliberately challenged, in whatever form the day allows. I run, and I trek, and over time it is the mountains that have come to mean the most to me. They are my calling in a way that is difficult to fully articulate. Standing at the base of a significant climb and looking up at where you intend to go reshapes your sense of what is achievable. Mountains do not negotiate. They do not offer a shorter route. They ask you to commit fully, pace yourself honestly, and keep moving even when

the terrain is not cooperating.

When I am on a challenging track, I set targets on timing, not just on reaching the summit. Holding yourself to that discipline, on demanding terrain where conditions are never guaranteed, is exactly the mental practice that transfers to complex organisations. The mountain does not care that you had a difficult meeting before you started climbing. You find a way, or you do not reach the top.

I take these challenges with family and team too. Shared difficulty builds something no offsite can replicate. The core discipline, whether running or on a trail, is the same: the commitment must outlast the disruption. I do not exercise at a fixed hour. The day rarely allows it. I find the way, because hard things done only in perfect conditions rarely get done at all.

"Mountains do not offer a shorter route. They ask you to commit fully, pace yourself honestly, and keep moving even when the terrain is not cooperating."

Whose counsel do you value most — professionally or personally?

Honestly, I learn from everyone, from people in my professional network, but equally from those I encounter in the ordinary flow of life. I have picked up genuine insight simply by observing people on the move: the way someone handles a difficult moment, the manner in which a person reads a situation without being told anything. Leadership and human wisdom are everywhere, if you are paying attention.

But my most surprising and humbling teachers are my daughters — **Ishita and Prisha**. They challenge the status quo far more readily than I do, and when I enter a real conversation with them, they surprise me every time with the depth of knowledge they have acquired so early in their lives. There is a quality to that

generation's curiosity, unencumbered by the assumptions that accumulate with experience, that I find instructive. They make me examine things I had quietly stopped questioning.

My elder daughter has started her own venture (**GrowCo – Digital production and editing services**). Watching her has been a masterclass in a particular kind of courage — the willingness to learn fast, to step deliberately out of comfort, to absorb everything about running a business by actually doing it, and then to show her team the way forward not from a position of expertise, but from one of total commitment. That kind of leadership, earned through action rather than seniority, reminds me regularly of what truly counts.

And from my life partner, I learn patience and belief, two qualities that are quietly foundational to everything else. In the more demanding chapters of leadership, I return to those two things more than I return to any framework or strategy.

How do you manage, motivate, and develop the next generation of supply chain talent?

The biggest shift I have made is giving up the assumption that younger professionals will be motivated by the same things that motivated me at their stage. When I entered the workforce, stability and steady advancement were the implicit contract. Today, the people I most want to keep are asking, within the first six months, whether their work matters and whether they are genuinely growing. That used to make senior leaders uncomfortable, myself included. Now I take it as useful information.

If a young procurement analyst cannot tell me how their work connects to something real — a product we make, a supplier we are developing, a risk we

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A true colleague is someone who helps you identify your blind spots: not what you already know about yourself, but the things that limit you precisely because you cannot see them. I seek those people out, and I hold those relationships as the most valuable I have. It takes trust to deliver that kind of honesty, and humility to receive it. Without it, you stagnate. Which is why I believe this: if you are not improving, you are deteriorating. There is no stable middle ground.

are managing — the accountability for that gap sits with me, not with them. I also no longer pretend to be the most technologically fluent person in the room. My younger team members are often ahead of me in what a new digital tool can and cannot do. My role is to create the conditions in which their learning becomes organisational capability. More curatorial, less directive. I find it far more productive.

What does staying sharp look like for you outside the office?

The mountains. They are my most consistent source of clarity and ambition outside of work. A significant climb demands complete attention and earns its view honestly. There is no shortcut to the ridge, and that honesty is what I find most restoring. I try to stay physically active as a matter of principle, and I actively promote that in my family and my team. What moves me is when someone who started out uncertain finds a new relationship with physical challenge. A few have surprised me completely, and that shift tends to carry into how they approach professional targets as well. Mountains aspire you to bigger things. That feeling rarely stays on the trail.

How would your team describe your leadership style? And how would you describe it?

Straightforwardness, and I mean that in its fullest sense, not simply as a style preference. Most of the time I will say things very directly. I will name what I observe, point to what is not working, and sometimes that makes people uncomfortable. I am aware of it, and I do not apologise for it, because I believe the most respectful thing you can offer another person is an honest signal, not a managed one.

But what matters more than the

giving side is being equally hungry to receive it. A true colleague is someone who helps you identify your blind spots: not what you already know about yourself, but the things that limit you precisely because you cannot see them. I seek those people out, and I hold those relationships as the most valuable I have. It takes trust to deliver that kind of honesty, and humility to receive it. Without it, you stagnate.

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What personal disciplines or rules have you set for yourself that help you perform consistently at a high level?

I have become far more selective about the problems I personally insert myself into. Early in my career, I wanted to be in every conversation and across every significant decision, partly because I felt the pressure to demonstrate capability, and partly because letting go was hard. What leading increasingly large and complex organisations has taught me is that the leader who is everywhere is often the ceiling of the team's capability. If every problem routes to me, I have failed to build an organisation that can act without me.

So I am now deliberate about which problems genuinely require my direct involvement, and which ones require me to step back and let the team find the answer, even when I can see the answer already. That restraint is harder than it sounds. I am also more selective about external commitments: I say yes only where I can be fully present. The discipline

of honest declining has, I think, made the commitments I do make considerably more valuable — to the people I make them to, and to myself.

And finally, what does the next chapter look like — for you and for the profession?

I am fully in this chapter right now. Amber is a complex, fast-growing organisation with meaningful work ahead, and that is where my attention sits. But when I allow myself to think further out, what I want to build is a body of work, not a résumé. Organisations that became more capable because supply chain contributed something real: not simply cheaper or faster, but more resilient, more transparent, and better prepared for what they did not see coming.

I am also drawn increasingly to the broader ecosystem: the next generation of supply chain professionals, the industry conversation about how India builds procurement maturity to match its manufacturing ambitions. Every summit becomes the base of the next climb. A career works the same way. The question is not where it ends, but what you are willing to keep moving toward.

THINK BIG, START SMALL, LEARN FAST

When you're managing complex supply chains at breakneck speed, every second—and every decision—counts. Yet, according to **Vikas Sharma, Chief Operating Officer, Zepto**, the secret to mastering massive scale isn't just speed; it's humility, ruthless prioritization, and staying close to the ground. In this interview, Vikas shares his personal playbook on leadership, decision-making under uncertainty, and why the most powerful growth comes from learning what to say 'No' to.



What is the ambition that currently excites you most, and what makes this particular chapter of your journey significant to you?

What excites me most at this stage is the opportunity to build something that can operate on an extraordinary scale without losing human touch. Having spent much of my career building and scaling supply chains, operations and customer experiences, I am increasingly interested in the intersection of technology, people and execution. This chapter feels significant because operational excellence is no longer simply about efficiency or cost. It is about creating speed, resilience, customer obsession and sustainable value together. I want the next phase of my journey to be about building systems and leaders that are bigger than any one individual.

Is there a book, idea or philosophy that has influenced the way you approach life or leadership, and how has it found expression in the way you live or work?

One philosophy that has stayed with me is, "Think big, start small, learn

fast." Operations have taught me that great ideas are easy to discuss but much harder to execute consistently. I believe in solving problems close to the ground, testing quickly, learning from the data and then scaling what works. This has also shaped my leadership style. I don't believe leadership is about having all the answers, but about creating an environment where people ask the right questions, challenge assumptions and learn quickly. For me, progress has always been a combination of ambition and humility: Aim High, Stay Close to Reality.

When faced with a significant decision, what tends to guide you most strongly, experience, instinct, data, discussion or something else?

I would say data gives me direction, experience gives me context, and instinct tells me when something doesn't quite add up. I rarely make important decisions based on just one of these. I like to understand the facts, listen to people closest to the problem, challenge my own assumptions and then make the call. In a fast-moving environment, waiting for

perfect information can itself become a bad decision. So, my approach is simple: get enough clarity, make the call, move quickly and be willing to change your mind when the facts change.

What is a personal discipline that has had an outsized influence on your effectiveness, particularly as the demands on your time and attention have grown?

One discipline that has become increasingly important for me is protecting thinking time. As responsibilities grow, it is easy to spend the entire day reacting to meetings, messages and the next urgent issue. Leadership requires creating space to step back and think about what is important. I also try to prioritize ruthlessly. Not everything deserves the same amount of time, and not every problem needs to be solved by the leader. The more senior you become, the less your effectiveness comes from doing more yourself and the more it comes from helping the organization focus on what truly matters.

Whose counsel do you value when

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you want to look at a situation from a perspective different from your own?

I value people who are willing to disagree with me intelligently. The most valuable counsel doesn't necessarily come from the person with the most seniority. It often comes from someone who sees the problem differently, asks an uncomfortable question or has a completely different experience. I particularly value conversations with people who are close to the customer and close to the ground, as they often see reality that doesn't appear in dashboards or management reviews. My rule is simple: seek people who expand your thinking, not people who simply validate it.

Leadership today involves engaging with people who may have very different expectations of work, purpose and career. What has changed most in your own approach to working with the next generation?

The biggest change has been moving from "telling people what to do" to "creating the context in which they can succeed." The next generation wants to understand the why, values autonomy and expects their work to have meaning. I see that as a positive change. My role as a leader is therefore less about providing every answer and more about providing clarity, creating ownership and giving people the freedom to experiment. At the same time, I believe the fundamentals haven't changed: high standards, accountability, integrity and respect remain timeless.

What is an interest outside your professional world that has

remained a meaningful source of curiosity or enjoyment for you?

I enjoy travelling and exploring new places, particularly observing how different cities and cultures work. Travel gives me a different perspective on everyday life, from how people shop and move to how they communicate and interact with their surroundings. I naturally find myself observing the systems behind these experiences. I also enjoy sport, particularly the competitive aspect of it. Sport is a fascinating reminder that talent alone isn't enough. Consistency, teamwork, strategy and the ability to perform under pressure often make the difference.

What aspect of your personality tends to have the greatest influence on the way you work with people?

I would say intensity with empathy. I am naturally driven by outcomes and enjoy solving difficult problems. I set high standards for myself and, consequently, for the teams I work with. But I have also learned that you cannot build great organisations through pressure alone. People need clarity, trust and the confidence that their leader will stand behind them when things don't go as planned. I therefore try to combine high expectations with genuine accessibility. The best teams are not those that never make mistakes, but those that are comfortable raising a problem early and confident enough to solve it together.

What is something you have become more selective about as your career has progressed, whether it is the opportunities you pursue, the commitments you make

or the way you spend your time?

I have become much more selective about where I invest my time and energy. Earlier in my career, growth often meant saying yes to more responsibilities, opportunities and problems to solve. With experience, I have realized that growth is also about knowing what to say no to. I now look for opportunities where there is a meaningful problem to solve, strong people to learn from and the possibility of creating something that lasts. I am less interested in being busy and more interested in being useful. That distinction has become increasingly important to me.

When you look beyond your current role and the milestones ahead, what is the kind of life and leadership journey you would like to be creating for yourself?

Ultimately, I would like my journey to be measured by more than titles, scale or business results. I want to look back and feel that I built things that mattered, developed people who went on to build things of their own, and left every organization stronger than I found it. Professionally, I want to continue working in complex, high-growth environments where technology, operations and people can create extraordinary customer experiences. Personally, I want to maintain curiosity, keep learning and remain grounded despite the scale of responsibility. If there is one legacy I would aspire to, it is to be remembered as someone who built high-performing businesses without losing sight of the people who made them possible.

FROM EXPERIENCE TO IMPACT

A distinguished career is ultimately defined not by the number of roles held, but by the depth of perspective gained along the way—and the value that perspective creates for others. For **Vinay S. Chauhan, Regional Lead, Indirect Procurement – BSAPIC, Bridgestone EMIA**, decades of experience across engineering, manufacturing, planning, supply chain and procurement have shaped a philosophy that continues to evolve: from execution, to excellence, to value creation. His journey reflects a rare combination of intellectual curiosity, business breadth and a deep commitment to making complexity simpler, decisions sharper and the people around him more capable.



What is the ambition that currently excites you most, and what makes this particular chapter of your journey significant to you?

What excites me most today is the opportunity to create meaningful value through procurement at a time when our industry is undergoing significant change. Established players face increasingly intense competition from emerging companies with leaner operating models, bringing cost competitiveness into much sharper focus. Procurement has consequently moved closer to the centre of the business agenda, creating an exciting opportunity to contribute directly to business performance.

I am equally energised by the way artificial intelligence is reshaping how we live and work. I was fortunate to develop an interest in AI relatively early, which has helped me understand both its capabilities and its practical applications. I see it as a powerful enabler of productivity, better decisions and simpler ways of working.

This chapter is personally significant as well. When I graduated, I had a simple aspiration: I wanted my final working

day to be the day on which I was able to contribute the most to my organisation. In other words, I wanted my value to keep growing with experience, rather than allowing experience to become merely a measure of time served. The earlier stages of my career helped me understand the pulse and nuances of the business across functions and environments. Today, I am in a position to translate that accumulated experience into broader organisational value.

I also find great satisfaction in making complex ideas simple and actionable. Seeing a concept become clear to a colleague is genuinely rewarding. Increasingly, I see my role not only as delivering results, but also as helping others become more capable and effective.

Is there a book, idea or philosophy that has influenced the way you approach life or leadership?

One idea that has influenced me for many years comes from *Born to Win*. My reading journey began with fiction when a friend introduced me to Alistair MacLean. That sparked a lasting habit,

and over time I gravitated towards books that challenged the way I thought about life, work and personal growth. Born to Win left a particularly deep impression on me through a simple reversal of a familiar idea. We often say, “Believe what you see”, whereas the book suggests that we begin to see what we truly believe. To me, this means forming a clear belief about what you want to learn or become, and then remaining alert to the opportunities that can take you there.

When I graduated as a mechanical engineer, my first ambition was to understand engineering in the real world. Opportunities in design and development, followed by the manufacture of machine parts, gave me that foundation. Once I understood how things were made, my curiosity shifted to another question: how does an organisation decide what to make, when to make it and in what quantity? That question led me into production planning and control.

In that role, I interacted frequently with logistics and supply chain teams. I became curious about the challenges they faced and the reasons behind last-minute urgent requests. Eventually, I

had the opportunity to lead the function myself. One of my most satisfying experiences was working with a strong team to improve service and fill rates without sophisticated technology or external consultants. We relied on sound fundamentals, data, common sense and continuous improvement.

The same philosophy guides me in procurement today. A business creates value by growing revenue, improving productivity and managing cost intelligently. My ambition is to apply what I have learned across engineering, manufacturing, planning and supply chain to help procurement create that value. Looking back, many of the opportunities in my career began with a belief that something was worth understanding. That is why the idea from Born to Win continues to resonate with me.

When faced with a significant decision, what tends to guide you most strongly—experience, instinct, data, discussion or something else?

I rarely rely on a single factor when making a significant decision. Experience, instinct, data and discussion all have a role. If I had to distil my approach into three elements, they would be understanding the pulse of the situation, then applying judgement and intuition.

Understanding the pulse means looking beyond the visible problem and asking why it exists. That requires data, conversations with people close to the issue and perspectives from different parts of the organisation. No leader can be present everywhere, so listening carefully and learning from the experience of others are essential.

Once the underlying issue is clear, the direction often becomes more apparent. This is where experience and instinct come into play. I do not see instinct as a substitute for analysis; I see it as the ability to recognise a pattern before all the evidence has fully come together.

Intuition can also be valuable, but it is most likely to surface when the mind is calm, open and attentive.

For example, during a discussion on master data management, a presenter referred to the UNSPSC classification system. Something about it immediately struck me as significant. We explored it in depth, understood how it could bring consistency to material coding, material groups and taxonomy, and eventually implemented the approach.

That initiative helped create a more structured and mature foundation for master data management, and it remains one of the achievements of which I am particularly proud. It reinforced a lesson I have learned repeatedly: data helps define the problem, discussion broadens perspective, experience provides context, and instinct often tells you where to look more closely.

Whose counsel do you value when you want to look at a situation from a perspective different from your own?

One person whose counsel I have valued greatly is Mr. Ajay Sevakari. He was my manager for nearly two decades, and we worked together for more than 25 years. I had the opportunity to observe his progression from procurement management to becoming a young Director at Bridgestone India and, later, Managing Director of Bridgestone's Diversified Products division in India.

What has always impressed me is his ability to read a situation. He combines strong business awareness with speed of thought and is willing to take an unconventional approach when circumstances demand it. I have seen him navigate difficult negotiations, operational challenges and complex situations with clarity and decisiveness. In the toughest moments, he does not shy away from the hardest decisions, and he remains anchored in strong beliefs, ethics and principles.

The quality I value most is his ability to anticipate how a situation may evolve. He often sees dimensions and consequences that are not immediately apparent to me. That is precisely why I seek his perspective when I want to challenge my own thinking.

I do not look to a mentor simply for an answer. I value someone who helps me view the same situation through a different lens. A conversation with him often sharpens my judgement and enables me to reach a better decision.

What has changed most in your own approach to working with the next generation?

I have a slightly different perspective on this question. There is considerable discussion about how the next generation has fundamentally different expectations of work and career. Although the way those expectations are expressed may have changed, I believe the underlying human needs remain similar: people want to contribute, learn, be respected and experience the satisfaction of accomplishing something meaningful.

My approach, therefore, is not to manage people differently simply because they belong to a particular generation. What has changed is that I am more deliberate about creating an environment in which people understand the problem, participate in solving it and see the impact of their contribution.

We work with a project-oriented mindset. We take a problem as a challenge, examine it through the **5W1H framework - why it exists, what is really happening, who is affected, where and when it occurs, and how it can be solved - and then work through it together**. The process can be demanding, but the sense of achievement when a team reaches a solution is tremendous.

I have also learned that people observe a leader more closely than we sometimes realise. If you expect

Curiosity is probably the personality trait that most strongly influences how I work with people. I am naturally interested in what people are saying, why they are saying it, which experiences shape their perspective and what may be happening beneath the surface of a problem. That curiosity helps me avoid jumping to conclusions.

Early in my career, my focus was primarily on execution – getting things done well and reliably. Over time, that evolved into a pursuit of excellence: improving processes, raising standards and finding better ways of working.

Today, my thinking has moved a step further. I increasingly ask, "What value will this create for the organisation?" Not every activity that can be done needs to be done, and not every improvement creates meaningful business impact. For me, the journey has been from execution to excellence, and ultimately to value creation.

commitment, you must demonstrate it. If the team is struggling with a problem, you cannot simply delegate it and walk away. To a large extent, a team reflects the behaviour that its leader consistently demonstrates.

My biggest learning is therefore simple: focus less on generational labels and more on meaningful work, involvement, consistency and leading by example. I have found that these principles work remarkably well across generations.

What is an interest outside your professional world that has remained a meaningful source of curiosity or enjoyment for you?

I have always believed that if you are digging a well, you are more likely to find water by going deeper in one place than by repeatedly digging shallow wells in different places. That philosophy also describes my interests: I tend to explore a subject deeply rather than move quickly from one interest to another. At present, artificial intelligence is that area of curiosity for me. Although it has clear relevance to my professional life, my interest extends well beyond its immediate workplace applications. I spend considerable time understanding how AI works, how it is evolving and how it may reshape the way people learn, make decisions and solve problems.

What fascinates me most is that we may be witnessing a fundamental change in how humans interact with technology. There is always something new to discover, and that keeps me intellectually engaged. My interest outside the immediate demands of my role is, quite simply, learning deeply about a force that is changing the world around us - and at this moment, that force is AI. In my case, I also need a strong diversion to relax. I

often do so my binge-watching during weekends.

What aspect of your personality tends to have the greatest influence on the way you work with people?

Curiosity is probably the personality trait that most strongly influences how I work with people. I am naturally interested in what people are saying, why they are saying it, which experiences shape their perspective and what may be happening beneath the surface of a problem.

That curiosity helps me avoid jumping to conclusions. I prefer to ask questions, understand the context and consider different perspectives before deciding on a course of action. In most business situations, there are multiple stakeholders, competing priorities and unavoidable trade-offs. My aim is therefore not to pursue an ideal solution in isolation, but to find one that is practical, balanced and adaptable across the organisation. For me, curiosity is not simply a desire to know more. It means listening more deeply, understanding the problem more fully and, ultimately, making more thoughtful decisions with people rather than for them.

What is something you have become more selective about as your career has progressed?

As my career has progressed, I have become much more selective about where I invest my time and energy. The lens I increasingly apply is value creation.

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Today, my thinking has moved a step further. I increasingly ask, "What value will this create for the organisation?"

Not every activity that can be done needs to be done, and not every improvement creates meaningful business impact. I have therefore become more selective about the initiatives I pursue and the commitments I make. For me, the journey has been from execution to excellence, and ultimately to value creation.

What is the kind of life and leadership journey you would like to be creating for yourself?

When I look beyond my current role and the milestones ahead, two things matter to me. The first is a sense of satisfaction with the journey so far. I have been fortunate to grow in the way I wanted to grow and, more importantly, to learn in the way I wanted to learn. Each stage of my career has allowed me to understand a different dimension of business, and that continuous learning has been deeply fulfilling.

At this stage, however, my focus is gradually shifting from what I can achieve personally to what I can help create around me. Professionally, I want to continue transforming business operations by making them simpler, more efficient and better able to create value. Equally important is the opportunity to share what I have learned and help others develop into confident future leaders.

Ultimately, I would like my leadership journey to be measured not only by the transformations I helped deliver, but also by the people who grew, accepted larger responsibilities and became leaders in their own right.

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