

# Cognizant Hosts Summit on Importance of Diversity and Inclusion as a Business Priority



Cognizant recently hosted an industry summit in Mumbai bringing together business leaders, influencers, and policymakers to discuss the growing need for progressive Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) business policies in today's technology-driven digital era.

More than 150 participants attended the event, including experts in the field, thought leaders, and policymakers as well as executives from Cognizant and its client and partner companies. Participating dignitaries included Delhi-based transgender activist and model Rudrani Chettri; renowned storyteller Dr Seema Anand; National Award winning filmmaker Apurva Asrani; Dr. Saundarya Rajesh, Social Entrepreneur, Founder & President, AVTAR Group, Co-founder of Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan Nikhil Dey, to name a few.

Cognizant leaders included Debashis Chatterjee, President, Global Delivery and Cognizant Digital Systems & Technology, Sumithra Gomatam, President, Cognizant Digital Operations; Aan Chauhan, Global Chief Technology Officer; Manish Bahl, AVP, Center for the Future of Work; and Smriti Ahuja, Global Head, Organizational Effectiveness and India D&I Lead.

The summit included focused discussions on key issues that are beginning to acquire urgency in both corporates and civil societies. Moderated by Ashwini Deshpande of Elephant, India's largest independent integrated design consultancy, panellists shared perspectives on how, in an increasingly digital world, companies can design bias-free technology-enabled products and services. In another session, experts encouraged leaders to 'be the change' and spearhead an inclusive organizational dialogue to enable true progress. Filmmaker Apurva Asrani led a thought-provoking conversation on the biases faced by the LGBTQ communities and ways in which people and society can work towards mainstreaming India's LGBTQ communities. Cognizant's Manish Bahl offered perspectives how digital technologies that are shaping the future of work will impact women's participation in the work force.

## Diversity & Inclusion @ Cognizant

Cognizant D&I philosophy is that organizations with a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment are better prepared to meet the complex demands of a dynamically changing business environment. With an eye on the future, Cognizant believes that the only way to close the 1.5 million gap in technology jobs expected by 2020 is by an industry-wide push for more diversity and inclusion. The organization has made the D&I mandate a very critical aspect of its annual operating plans and is also geared to invest in multi-million-dollar technology development programmes among under-represented groups.

Today, women make up 38 percent of Cognizant's workforce, and this number is set to improve year-on-year. In the past one year alone, Cognizant has increased its hiring of women leaders by 100 percent. Its company-wide women leadership programme, 'Propel', aims to identify and develop 400 future women leaders by the end of this year.

Speaking on the occasion, Sumithra Gomatam, President - Digital Operations, Cognizant, said, "Diversity has always been a defining feature of the Cognizant DNA, right from inception. At Cognizant, we firmly believe that our differences encourage various perspectives and ideas that foster innovation. Different voices and views lead to new ideas, the creation of new services, and provide valuable insight into customers. As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, we reaffirm our commitment to inclusion and diversity as a key business strategy and priority."

Commenting on the summit, Award Winning Filmmaker, Apurva Asrani, said, "I congratulate Cognizant for facilitating this much needed industry dialogue. Corporate India has a critical role to play in enhancing the awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ rights. Given that technology is an integral part of our lives, it is heartening to see conversations on prevention of unconscious bias in tech product development. This event is a huge step forward and I hope that it has heightened industry awareness, enabled networking opportunities, and provided several insights to help make Inclusion a reality in our workplaces."

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