

Conquering the DIGITAL Divide

One of the largest technology services companies in the world, with offices in 46 countries and more than 319,000 consultants worldwide, Tata Consultancy Services is dominating the market with its innovation and customer focus.

Images by Scott Ehler

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has been at the forefront of technology and innovation for more than 45 years. Offering IT solutions and services for enterprise-level organisations, the company has global revenue of more than US\$15.5 billion per annum.

Deborah Hadwen joined TCS in 2005 and was appointed initially to lead the banking and financial sectors of the business in Australia and New Zealand. With a successful track record at large technology companies such as IBM and Compuware, Deborah succeeded in sales and management and was appointed CEO of TCS in Australia and New Zealand in April 2011.

The CEO Magazine had a conversation with Deborah about leadership, maintaining good customer relations, and why training and development of staff is so important.

The CEO Magazine: Since taking on the role of CEO, what have been some of the greatest challenges you've faced and how have you overcome them?

Deborah: The first challenge and opportunity has been to create strong foundations for our next phase of growth. We are very ambitious in our goals, and goals should be a challenge. We have focused on client relationship enhancement, so we are strengthening that ecosystem we formed around our customers. And that means bringing in our global capability, capacity, and innovation, as well as embedding strong leadership teams into our customers' businesses.

Second, a reorganisation of the sales team has been implemented in the past few years. This is so we can acquire new business effectively.

Third, investment in our local business ecosystem, marketing,

and community engagement has been a focus. It is really important to have values around engagement and corporate sustainability locally, and we place a strong focus around CSR to ensure appropriate contribution is made to the society in which we operate.

Due to the nature of our business, we are in a state of constant change, and that's both the challenge and the opportunity. This is because the marketplace in which we operate is advancing with new technologies and changing delivery paradigms. If you consider the impact of digital, of mobility, social technologies, and changing delivery models such as cloud, they all impact our clients. We need to ensure we're competitively ahead, we're informed, and we're skilled. We need to have the right solutions, and have enabled our team so that they can deliver those services to clients. >



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How do you think your past experience has shaped your leadership style?

I believe leadership means different things to different people; for me, it is very much about vision, communication, and accountability around yourself and your team. I have always been lucky to work in growth sectors. For growth, you really need momentum, and that needs to be obtained through a leadership style that is practical and enables action. That is the key to success. When I reflect on my leadership experiences that have been of value in this role, for me there are three key areas I would highlight.

Having a sales leadership background made me very outcome focused and customer-centric. Understanding your customers and ensuring you can get the organisation you are representing to align with them and their needs is very important. Even today, I personally connect with all of our customers as frequently as I can, so feeling their pulse, hearing their issues, and getting a sense of trend is of paramount importance. I believe leaders need to role model the behaviour they want in their team, and our team is very customer-centric.

The second one is the Asian experience I gained through working overseas. Working in a global IT services company, there are certain cultural sensitivities that need to be appreciated; but also working with customers in Australia who are looking to expand into Asia and understanding the practicality of these ambitions is important. Today, we have a business that includes multicultural teams that need to lead both local and global workforces to support our local customer needs.

The third one is more personal. I was very fortunate to grow up in a household of small-business owners, with parents talking about the basics of business, be it cashflow, customer service, or



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advertising. You really get a strong view on the basics of business at a very raw level in this environment. I am sure this has contributed to my being interested and engaged across the business rather than being an ivory-tower leader.

What is TCS’s approach to customer service?

Our core value proposition is around delivery quality, and that is what we focus on and what we are known for. Our customer promise is ‘experience certainty’. That commitment, through world-class processing standards and innovation, is where we spend most of our energy and time. We truly believe that most of the best solutions for our customers come from collaborative relationships with them, and we work very closely with them to understand their unique business transformation goals.

We are in a great position to leverage partnerships with industry, with academics, and with technology leaders to bring in those industry-leading solutions for our Australian-based

clients. In addition, our global footprint allows us to work as an extension of our customers’ businesses, giving them the scale, flexibility, and insight into what they need to do either to grow their business or to add increased operational efficiencies.

Our client-engagement model is a long-term mindset, so it is a strong participation on both sides that makes it work really well. We are very process oriented and we have very strong governance, and that infuses the key principles around program leadership and executive sponsorship. The governance controls are really how we make sure that that relationship is of benefit to both parties, which is very important. We also have customers that are intensely involved with our business; they will visit our facilities in the USA, Europe, or India, and we will engage our senior executives and bring global thought leadership into Australia. Being able to give our customers those insights around how technology innovation can actually impact their business positively is a core value proposition that we bring to market.

How do you invest in staff with training and development?

At TCS, our people are our business, so we take their development very seriously. We have a significant investment in learning and development. We conduct a broad range of training and development programs; often the customer is centric to those programs. The mode of training comes through not just the classroom but by using technology: we conduct a large amount of e-learning, which covers a broad range of topics from domain knowledge to technical education, soft skill development; even knowledge around working in different countries is important.

We are witnessing a rapid increase in short, online micro courses which are gaining popularity with the team. As you can imagine, with a workforce of technology professionals, it is a significant priority to invest in their learning and development. That goes all the way through to graduates; we have a team of graduates currently spending three months at our education facilities in India, going straight out of university in Australia, gaining valuable industry knowledge, and then coming back into the Australian customer base to provide a range of services.

TCS is a great company for a technology professional who is interested in ongoing learning, because learning is not just formal; we give the opportunity to rotate across projects even in different countries. From an L&D perspective, we also have a strong academic alliance program. To drive this forward, we work with a number of key academic institutions in Australia and across the world.

Internally, we are a huge user of social platforms, probably one of the biggest in the world. We have our own social platform called ‘KNOME’, which team members around the world use. They have an ability to collaborate and share knowledge, information, and insight. When

you have over 319,000 people having access to that kind of mechanism to communicate and share, it is quite powerful.

What are some of the benefits of being a global organisation?

The key benefit is the ability for us to be able to leverage global capability and capacity for the benefit of our local clients, providing them with global insights and ability to move their business forward. We have a scale of offerings that allows us to provide a full range of services to our customers and create customised solutions and services addressing their unique business needs. This covers infrastructure services, enterprise solutions, application development and support, business process outsourcing, combined with our own unique intellectual property.

We assist our customers to maintain a real competitive advantage by assisting them to tap into our innovation labs and co-innovation networks. Our size and growth rate have allowed us to make ongoing investments in the company and in our people. That investment can be seen in frameworks, accelerators, tools, or software products. This business strategy and market offering has resulted in TCS being one of the top five global IT services companies. This position allows us to attract talented executives who are looking for an opportunity to work with a global leader, and also for clients who are looking to be leaders themselves and leverage global thinking and global capability.

What are some of the challenges and opportunities in the IT industry today?

Change is constant and is one of the key opportunities and challenges within the IT industry. We talk about digital being the default at TCS because that is really what we are seeing. We’re witnessing customers looking to re-imagine their business and the way they interact with their clients through the use of digital



technologies, and that is also bringing about a focus on the simplification of their internal systems to enable this strategy.

To ensure competitiveness, they are also looking to optimise costs. This strategy is a large part of a discussion with any customer—digitisation, cost, and simplification. We have seen a growing focus on business process outsourcing at the enterprise level in Australia. Companies are looking to optimise costs so they can invest in new market opportunities to take their business forward. We are working with customers to optimise what they’re doing and how they’re doing it, both in technology and in operations. This also includes guiding them on how they can use digital to enable and run their businesses more effectively. Digital is the default, combined with a necessary focus on governance and risk—large initiatives that are essential to address cost effectively.

Technology drives and enables change, bringing opportunity to provide value to a wide range of companies. Focusing on the customer and delivery excellence is the key to success. •