

COVER STORY

SHANTALA

→ President

SADANANDA

Experienced Business Leader and Change
Agent Driving Growth Through Innovation



Shantala Sadananda is an accomplished business leader with over 27 years of experience in consulting, technology, and outsourcing. As the **President** of Banking & Financial Services and Emerging Markets at **Innova Solutions**, she has successfully led and transformed organizations, leveraging her extensive cross-industry expertise. Shantala is a champion of innovation and creative disruption, driving sustainable strategies and solutions that deliver value-based outcomes for both organizations and their clients.

In addition to her professional achievements, Shantala is passionate about giving back to the community and is committed to promoting diversity and inclusion within the business and technology sectors. She has been recognized as one of the Top 50 Women Leaders of Illinois in 2022, and her dedication to building high performance and engagement within leadership has earned her a reputation as a respected mentor and coach.

Before Working for Innova Solutions

Shantala Sadananda holds dual bachelor's degrees in computer engineering and commerce and a postgraduate degree in operational research and management. She started her career as a graduate engineer trainee at Reliance Industries, a fully integrated manufacturing plant specializing in petrochemicals, polymers, polyesters, and others. It was here that she discovered her capacity for leadership, and her experience of overcoming a simple barrier taught her how unique perspectives can help break down barriers that traditional cultures can't recognize. She honed her fundamental leadership skills at Kanbay, where she was the first employee in an emerging technological area and taught fundamentals of coding, created a financial plan, developed sales and marketing plans, defined and sold to global clients, and ultimately took the business from ideation to implementation.

She has served in many senior roles, including running global delivery, financial services capital market vertical, technology services, nearshore center, and more. Prior to joining Innova Solutions as President of Global Banking, Financial Services, and Emerging markets, she served as President at Mindcrest, ran Global Banking and Payments at Hexaware, and had a short stint at Globant,

where she had the opportunity to work with Latin America and tackle the growing digital-first push in a post-COVID world.

About the Company

Innova Solutions is a global technology and consulting company that was founded in 1998 and is headquartered in Atlanta, GA. With over 55,000 professionals worldwide and an annual revenue approaching \$3B, Innova Solutions has a strong presence across various industries, including Banking, Financial Services & Insurance, Healthcare & Life Sciences, Retail & Manufacturing,

Communication, Media & Entertainment, Hi-Tech, and Energy & Utilities. The company provides a wide range of strategic consulting, technology, and business transformation solutions, including Digital Product Engineering, Customer Experience, Cloud Services, Data & Insights, Intelligent Automation (AI), Cyber Security, Managed Service Provider (MSP) Services, Talent Solutions, Direct Sourcing, and Business Process Outsourcing.

Innova Solutions partners with leading industry players such as Amazon Web Services (AWS), Salesforce, Google Cloud, IBM, and Microsoft, and is certified as a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE). With its robust

offerings and global footprint, Innova Solutions is well-positioned to help its clients tackle the next generation of business challenges.

Shantala's Personal Brand of Leadership

Shantala applies several key principles to help businesses, including having a clear vision, setting digestible goals, prioritizing honesty and integrity, and focusing on individuals while having fun. She emphasizes elegant simplicity, thoughtful communication, organized execution, and deliberate energy and resource allocation to create purposeful movement even when tackling large issues.



As a leader, Shantala's style of leadership centers around empathy and compassion. She believes that the decisions a leader makes affect not only their direct reports, but also the trajectories of their lives. Therefore, she focuses on developing genuine relationships with her team members, founded on trust, integrity, and kindness. She takes the time to understand their motivations, shares recognition, and creates a culture of commitment.

Shantala's leadership mantra is to be "steady in failure and humble in success," a value that she upholds both personally and professionally. By prioritizing her team members' well-being and fostering a positive and supportive work environment, she helps businesses thrive and achieve their goals.

Three Principles to Sustainable Growth

Shantala applies three key principles to help businesses sustain growth: embracing a culture of active experimentation and adaptation, keen observation, and building a strong community. These principles help her build a foundation of continuous learning, improvement, and innovation that helps businesses stay ahead in today's rapidly changing digital age.

Firstly, Shantala encourages businesses to embrace a culture of active experimentation and adaptation. This involves creating an environment that encourages experimentation, failure, and continuous improvement. By staying in a beta state, businesses can experiment with new ideas, products, and services, fail early and often, and learn from these experiences to succeed faster.

Secondly, Shantala emphasizes keen observation as the first step to learning. Observation allows businesses to gather insights and identify patterns that can help them make informed decisions. This could include examining customer behaviors, industry trends, and data patterns. By carefully observing and analyzing these factors, businesses can make more informed decisions and take actions that lead to sustainable growth.

Finally, Shantala emphasizes the importance of building a strong community within a business. By encouraging knowledge sharing and innovation through collaboration, businesses can gain an outside-in perspective that helps them understand their customers' needs and challenges



better. Additionally, by understanding their people and their challenges, businesses can build a more motivated and engaged workforce that is better equipped to drive sustainable growth.

Breaking the Biases

Shantala believes that unravelling implicit biases is the key to truly achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion in the workplace. She notes that even as corporations work to implement DEI practices, such as diverse hiring and recognizing holidays, they still struggle with implicit biases that prevent women from advancing into leadership roles. According to Shantala, in order to break these biases, women need to own their accomplishments and unapologetically celebrate the success of other women.

By doing so, they can change the stigma around women in leadership and show that they are just as capable and deserving of those roles as men. Additionally, building a

community and fostering collaboration can help ignite motivation within teams that can lead to more equitable decision-making.

Making up for the Lacking Qualities

Shantala believes that one of the most important qualities for leaders to possess is a people-centric approach. While there may be a tendency to focus solely on achieving quantitative results, leaders who prioritize building genuine relationships with their team members, fostering a sense of community, and valuing their contributions are better equipped to inspire and motivate their teams. Empathy and compassion are also crucial qualities for leaders to exhibit, as they allow for a deeper understanding of the individual motivations and challenges that team members may face.

One area where leaders may benefit from improvement is in their ability to embrace active experimentation and adaptation. With the fast-paced digital age, leaders need

to be open to trying new things, taking risks, and learning from failures. However, some leaders may resist change or be too focused on maintaining the status quo.

One area where leaders may need to focus more attention is on developing a long-term vision and sustaining success over time. Leaders need to think beyond short-term gains and focus on building a culture of innovation, collaboration, and continuous learning. This requires a willingness to invest in people, processes, and technologies that will support long-term growth and success.

A Word of Advice for Aspiring Women Leaders

Shantala offers several pieces of advice for women business executives/leaders looking to grow their own business:

Adopt an Attitude of Gratitude and Self-Care: As a woman, it's important to take care of yourself both

mentally and physically. This means taking time out of your day to reflect on your accomplishments and appreciate how far you have come. It's also important to prioritize your needs and acknowledge that it's okay to not be perfect.

Be Courageous and Have Confidence: As a leader, it's important to have confidence in your abilities and stand for something you strongly believe in. Be courageous in your decision-making and always act with a purpose. Remember that change is constant, so always be ready to adopt and adapt.

Build a Collaborative Network: Developing a co-op network of family, friends, work colleagues, and community members can be a valuable resource in your professional and personal life. This network can provide support and inspiration when you need it most, making the roller coaster of life more manageable.

Consistently Cultivate the Right Balance: Identify





unapologetically acknowledge and celebrate the success of other women.

Looking at the Future from a Leader's Perspective

Shantala's view of the future as a leader is one that is fast-paced, constantly evolving, and full of uncertainties. She emphasizes the importance of being agile and embracing change to navigate the polycrisis that the world is currently facing. As a global citizen, Shantala stresses the need for leaders to embrace diversity and seek out diverse teams to grow their businesses. She also highlights the importance of being a futurist, coach, student, and servant-leader to stay digitally fluent and keeping visions fresh and valuable.

Shantala recognizes that the future will require a balanced approach that leverages both human ingenuity and technology solutions, rather than replacing one with the other. Overall, Shantala's view of the future as a leader is one that is adaptable, innovative, and focused on creating value for businesses and society as a whole.

In addition, Shantala sees Innova Solutions becoming a market leader in the next five years, focused on addressing business solutions with innovative technology. She envisions the company taking strides towards scaling impact at the individual, organizational, and community levels. Shantala is also confident that she has a few more roles up her sleeve, but she remains committed to her larger goal of making the world a better place for the next generation. Shantala's vision for the future involves using innovative technology to create solutions that positively impact people and communities, while continuing to grow as a leader herself.



what matters to you most and have a compass that is uncompromisable. For Shantala, integrity and honesty are her true North. It's important to consistently cultivate the right balance in your life, knowing that everything should be done in moderation.

Know Your Priorities: Live each day as a page in your legacy. Stand for something bigger than yourself and you'll leave an impact that will outlast your time. It's important to know your priorities and keep them at the forefront of your decision-making.

Communicate Clearly: Effective communication is critical in business. Whether oral or written, clear communication can be an invaluable tool in your efforts to mobilize resources in a challenging adventure. This goes for nonverbal communication, too; the way you hold yourself, your expressions, and your attitude can build your reputation - or break it.

In addition to these pieces of advice, Shantala emphasizes the importance of always learning and being open to new ideas. As a leader, it's important to stay informed about industry trends and new technologies that can benefit your business. She also encourages women to celebrate their accomplishments and

