

EXECUTIVE VIEW



**Ms. Manisha Sood,
Director and Country
General Manager,
Fitbit India**



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INDIA'S LEADING GLOBAL SEARCH FIRM

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Manisha Sood is the Country General Manager-India for Fitbit. Manisha joined the company in August 2015, and was previously the Director, SMB for Microsoft India. At Microsoft, Manisha was responsible for leading the sales and marketing functions of the Small & Medium Enterprise Business within India.

Prior to Microsoft, she was at SanDisk where she was Country Manager & Director for the India & SAARC region for over six years. She has to her credit launching the SanDisk business in India and taking the brand to the leadership position. Manisha also evangelized Marketing for SanDisk in driving the brand's first ever TV campaign in the world which was later introduced in US and Latin America regions. In her career spanning over 25 years, Manisha has been in country head roles for over a decade-and-a-half.



Prior to SanDisk, Manisha worked with Kodak India Ltd. as General Manager, Digital Capture and Home Printing for 10 years and with Modi Olivetti as Business Manager. Manisha has over two dozen leadership awards and citations to her credit including the “Top 10 Most Influential People in Photography” award five times in a row for her incessant contribution to the Indian imaging sector. She was also listed among the 10 Women on Top in Indian IT by The Economic Times and Telecom's Women Team by the My Mobile magazine. Manisha holds a bachelor's degree in Chemistry from Bombay University and a Diploma in Computer Science from IITC Mumbai.

In a country where we are still grappling with issues like gender equality and diversity in organizations, how has your journey been to become one of the few women who occupy the corner office?

Fitbit provides an exciting and innovation-driven work environment.

We're a passionate team dedicated to health & wellness, and gender is irrelevant at our workplace, as it should be. Empowerment and inspiration are the two key values at the core of Fitbit globally. Men and women at any role in this organisation have these two values engrained within us, and are viewed with the same lens. Fitbit is an equal opportunity employer and has a very well balanced gender mix across the managerial and executive levels across markets.

What is your leadership style and why do think there are not more women like you who make it to the top?

On the contrary, I feel that women today are embracing their presence in every field, be it corporate or luxury. Women do tend to be collaborative, and that is important in a world and a work force that is changing so fast. The challenge in most organizations is to innovate and adapt. You need different perspectives at the table from diverse backgrounds.

What I've observed is that as women, we often wait until we're competent before we feel confident. But men often feel confident before they've achieved full competence. Success correlates just as closely with confidence as it does with competence. No wonder we see such few women, despite all our progress, represented at the highest levels.



What have been some of your most critical challenges at work and how did you deal with them?

With India being a price sensitive market, our initial concern was the response of people with launch of Fitbit in India. However, through media playing an important role in generating awareness, more and more people became aware of the brand which in turn helped us get great response from the Indian market.

How is the Wearables market in India compared to the other markets you operate in? Amidst the news of a global slowdown in the wearables market and decline in sales, what are your plans for India?

Despite the initial apprehension, India is emerging as one of the leading markets for wearable devices. According to the recent report by International Data Corporation, Fitness trackers saw an increase, as wearable market grows by 3.1% in third quarter.

At Fitbit, we want to continue helping people lead healthier, more active lives by empowering them with data, inspiration and guidance to reach their health and wellness goals. We are working towards raising awareness in the country, by offering a fun and engaging experience, providing insights and guidance for users to get the most out of their devices.

India has traditionally been a price sensitive market. With the sudden increase in local and Chinese products aimed at the price sensitive but tech savvy consumers, how do you plan to address the issue and continue on the path of growth?

Over the years, other than technology the mind-set of people has also changed.

India, which was traditionally a price sensitive market has changed in terms of consumers now investing into good quality and reliable products. Contrary to our belief, Fitbit Surge which is the most expensive Fitbit fitness tracker has gained a large amount of popularity. With media generating awareness amongst people on the latest innovations and products, the customers are well educated and smart enough to invest money in the right products.

Engaging in fun activities and delivering products which will not only be beneficial for people, but also providing useful insights and guidance for customers to get the most out of their devices has always been Fitbit's aim. We shall continue on the same path to keep our customers happy.

What are you doing now to get further ingrained in the healthcare ecosystem? For a nation obsessed with food and eating out, how difficult is it to educate the consumers to keep track of their health through technology and move towards a healthier lifestyle?

Fitness and awareness towards health & wellness is gaining momentum globally. It started in the West a few years back but is gaining significant traction in India too. With this growing focus on personal health, fitness and wellbeing across India, and the strong demand for mobile devices and technology in the market, Fitbit is thrilled to be a part of this positive change. Health and fitness wearables is empowering and inspiring people to stay fit and overcome the traditional hurdles of time of day or location. Fitbit's success in India is very promising for the future of fitness wearables in the country.



With the recent advancements in health monitoring technologies, do you foresee business tie-ups with insurance companies to offer policies with premiums linked to physical activity and lifestyle of the consumer?

The coming year is going to be a promising year for Fitbit as we are looking at corporate and other tie-ups for the betterment of our customers by motivating them to bring a “Fit” change in their daily routine.

What are the highlights of your Corporate Wellness program and how open are organizations to explore this concept? How do you manage the program and maintain continuity?

We, at Fitbit aim to motivate people to lead healthier lives, as a result of which we tie up with various organisations to achieve this goal. One such initiative by Fitbit is the Corporate Wellness program which not only aims at increasing employee productivity and improve health status but also boosts acquisition and creates a culture of well-being.

Organizations are more than happy to incorporate this for the betterment of its employee and to maintain a fit environment in the organisation we keep thinking of unique and fun ways to engage the employees and motivate them to lead a healthier life.

At a macro level, there has recently been a lot of talk about promoting technology to reach every Indian. What do you think needs to be done to digitize India and to promote technology?

What kind of impact are we aiming for?

The government is coming up with great initiatives and programmes to digitize India. One such programme is The Digital India initiative which aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. It aims to connect entire India digitally in the span of 4 years which will help bring in transparency and accountability by easy and open access to documents and information to the citizens.

It will also help create awareness amongst people which in turn will lead them to make smarter choices and better investments.

From Artificial Intelligence and Driverless cars to wearable technology, where is technology headed? Where do you feel will the next level of disruption come from?

Internet of Things has touched all the verticals of our lives, traversing us speedily from one utility to another, from digitally connected smart homes to Internet of connected cars. Whether you are or not yet ready to embrace the future of automotive, but Internet of Things is here, to stay and evolve. Ever since Google's self-driving car and similar connected vehicles have made news, the field of IoT connected cars and transportation is rapidly evolving with more prototypes and more in-car functionalities.

The R&D team at Fitbit is also working to make our products more innovative to encourage people to lead healthier lives.

What do you personally look for in an individual when hiring for key positions?

As mentioned, Fitbit provides for an exciting and innovation driven environment. Diligence and motivation however, are the key points we look for while considering a new hire be it for key positions or on an initial stage. Other than this the person should be able to come up with new and innovative ways to be able to fit in a fun-frolic environment.

Is there is a specific focus on diversity at Fitbit? How do you ensure a diverse workforce in India?

Our operations in India have just begun, 18 months back with a Country Marketing and Country Retail Manager in my team leading the operations in India. Fitbit is an equal opportunity employer and has a very well balanced gender mix across the managerial and executive levels across markets.

What are some of the most important things that budding CEOs and entrepreneurs need to keep in mind to succeed in the long run?

To become a successful CEO or entrepreneur it is important to understand the needs of the market you wish to target. Other than that, consumer loyalty is one such important factor to keep in mind while aiming to reach success in your sphere.

On an informal note, how does your average day look like? What keeps you occupied when you are not at work?

Being responsible for the countrywide operations comes great responsibilities, hence, most of my time goes in travelling for meetings – with partners and exhibitors. I am a gourmet and the one thing I have picked up on numerous travels is an interest in cooking. I am usually found in the kitchen on weekends, cooking for friends and family. When I am not travelling, I love to spend time with my husband, two daughters and Czar, my dog!



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Our core strength is undoubtedly our knowledge base and a team of efficient and experienced consultants with in-depth understanding of their chosen sectors. We are the pioneers of the “Accountability Clause” in the Indian retained search and have always striven to align our business model.

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Contact

For queries please contact:
info@executiveaccess.co.in

Executive Access (India) Private Limited

Unit 6, D2, 3rd Floor, Southern Park
Saket District Centre,
Saket, New Delhi:110017
Phone No.: +91 11 40511200
Email: delhi@executiveaccess.co.in
www.executiveaccess.co.in

